DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF ON
★★ FASCISM ★★
AMERICAN STYLE

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SUPER DOUBLE
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COMETS ON FIRE & HOWLIN' RAIN'S Ethan Miller TAKES THE HIGH ROAD

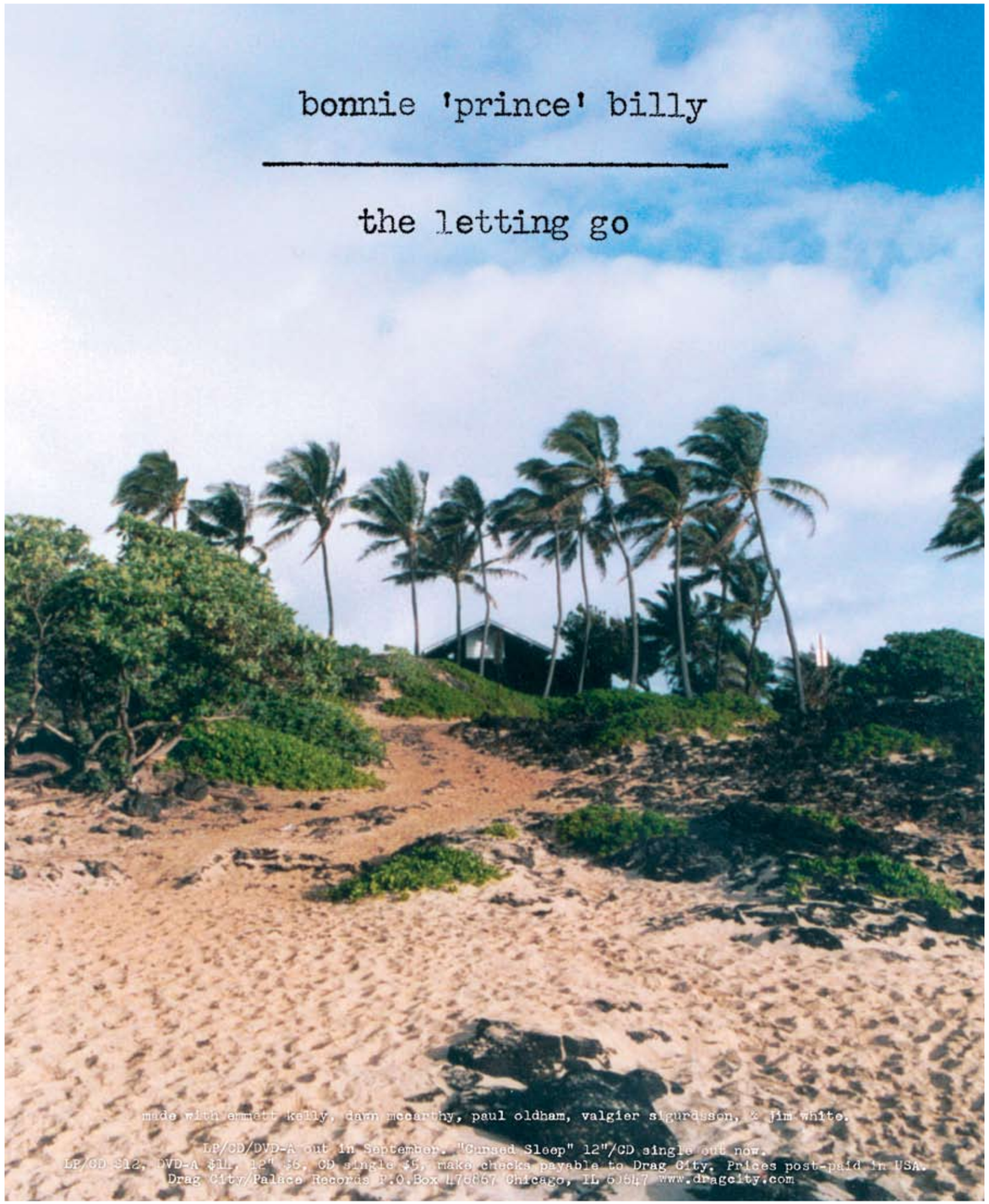
by
Trinie Dalton

plus

Let 'em in

IN PRAISE OF
ALL-AGES SHOWS







October 02006
Vol. 1, Number 24

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Courier Sans designed by James Goggin
Goudy Heavyface designed by Frederic Goudy

Arthur is printed on 35% recycled stock with PET-free, vegetable- and soy-based inks. It's 100% recyclable.

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It's Miller time!
Ethan Miller photographed by Eden Batki in San Francisco, July 2006.

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Eden Batki is currently very into Chinese avant garde folk music, and listening to recorded books on her ipod. edenbatki.com

Mr. Byron Coley is into heavy therapy and house painting.

Molly Frances enjoys the company of almost all rocks, herbs, and animals. molly@crystalarchive.com

Trinie Dalton's short story collection, "Wide Eyed" (Akashic), was nomintated for a Pushcart Prize and was also a finalist for *The Believer* Book Award. She also co-edited "Dear New Girl or Whatever Your Name Is" (McSweeney's). She has work in the August issue of *The Believer*, as well as fiction forthcoming in "Ninth Letter."

"Asthma," a collection of **John Hankiewicz**'s recent work, has just been published by Sparkplug Comics.

Glynnis McDaris is from Memphis, TN and now splits her time between NYC and Upstate NY. Her music and fashion stories appear in publications including *i-D* and *People* Magazine and is co-founder of the company, Wildcat NYC. She is currently working on an art project about Fountains to be exhibited in December. glynnismcdaris.com

Geoff McFetridge is working on a new mimeo for Bastet, making art for Patagonia's new surf clothing line and reading *Little House on the Prairie*.

Kristine McKenna is a Los Angeles-based writer and curator. Her exhibition 'Semina Culture: Wallace Berman & His Circle' is presently on a five-venue tour of the the U.S. She is working on a volume of photography by Wallace Berman, and a documentary film about the Ferus Gallery which will be accompanied by a book slated for publication in 2006.

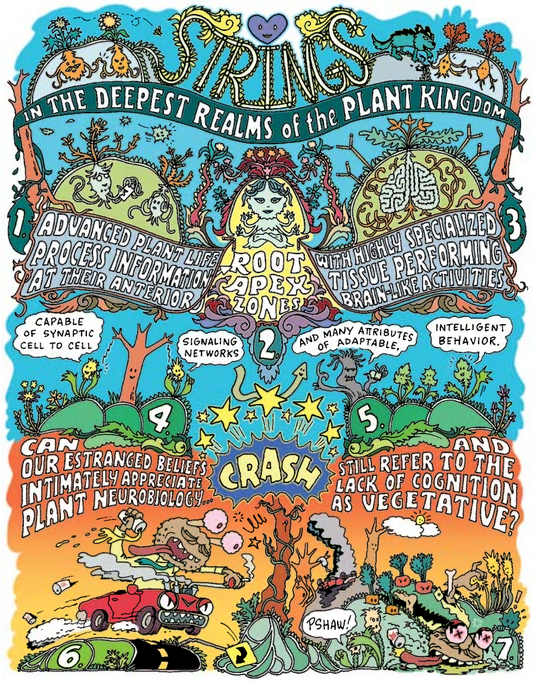
Thurston Moore does not support in-vogue socio/political nihilist theories but employs direct energy/vision towards new peace culture revolution. ecstaticpeace.com

Dave Reeves loses it if you say "Henry Kissinjah" in his presence. His current bedtime reading is the Rand Corporation's "Considering the Effects of a Catastrophic Terrorist Attack" report, available online in PDF.

Douglas Rushkoff is the author, most recently, of a comic book series called "Testament," now in its first collected edition from DC/Vertigo. He has written ten other books about media, technology and beliefs. rushkoff.com

PShaw and the band Fat Day have collaborated on the weirdest musical Viking Creation story ever pressed to 7 inch purple vinyl. The sleeve is a 22 x 29" fold-out comic strip poster and all the instruments are hand-made electronics. This exclusive package also comes with a lyric sheet and a CDR [if needed]: pshaw.net

Chris Ziegler was born in Tombstone, Arizona, and currently writes about music and *The Rockford Files* for the *Orange County Weekly* newspaper. Notes to christopher.ziegler@gmail.com



WRITING ON THE WALL

This issue's winner is from *Arthur* reader Mike Janssen, who saw this on a blank bulletin board at a public playground in Takoma Park, MD, July 29, 2006.

Seen any good slogans/commenary/poetry on the streets lately? Then take a picture of it. Send it to us at 300dpi, 100%. (If you don't know what that means, ask somebody who does.) Include the time/place of the photo. If your photo is chosen as *Arthur*'s "Billboard of the Month" you'll get a complimentary one-year subscription to *Arthur*. Send entries to editor@arthurmag.com.



LETTERS

Is ArthurFest More Evil Than A Golf Course?

I've read your mag periodically over the past few years and I'm not sure that YOU are sure what you stand for. I must say the Derrick Jensen interview ["Everything Must Go," July 2006] made me laugh. No, not because I disagree wth most of what he's saying, just the opposite actually. It's because only a few pages later you've talking up tons of bands that use up skadillions of watts of electricity when they perform, as you do every issue. It's because you print a letter ["Is *Arthur* sexist?", July 2006]. correctly berating *Arthur* for running those awful American Apparel ads (really, the first time I saw one I thought it was an ad for an escort service), then a a page later have an article about mint, of all sexless things, featuring a drawings of a nude woman cupping her breast. It's because you run a two part article about a couple of guys travelling the Middle East and one of them couldn't even figure out that a 75-cent haircut might stop his being constatly berated or stared at for being an American slob—hey Dan Chamberlin, I'm going to shock you but hair has been know to actually *grow back*! I noticed this while travelling in Mongolia, but it's funny how people in poor countries seem to look neater and better dressed than us representing the richest country on Earth.

So I end this letter with saying please clarify what you believe in. I'm sure the electricty used up for ArthurFest probably caused as much environmental damage as the pesticides used on a typical weekend at any golf course. At least we both agree on the anti-military stance.

Helen Block
internetland

Actually Helen, we checked with Daniel Chamberlin and he said his hair will not grow back—when it's gone, it's really gone. (Maybe that's why he's taken to calling himself Daniel 'Samson' Chamberlin.) Regarding the illustration by Ms. Molly Frances for last issue's "New Herbalist" column: Um, hello? That was no nude "woman"—that was the wood nymph Mintha, who was tranformed by Persephone into the plant Mint, which was the subject of Molly's column. Arthur *stands by the accuracy of that illustration. Everybody knows nymphs don't wear shirts.*

Bummed Out By Arthur's Ultimate Hippie Chick Fetish

The lack of women in any music magazine, while frustrating, is never a surprise. If I consider how many shows I've played where I am the only female plugging in pedals in a room full of rock guys, it's obvious that this is a systemic problem that could never be definitively linked to the number of female-devoted column inches in what is one of the best free publications in the country. The numbers simply are not 50/50 in real life. And considering the fact that *Arthur* has booked Yoko Ono, Sleater-Kinney, Cat Power and Joanna Newsom to headline its festivals, I think it's doing better than a token showing.

I have to admit though, that there is something subtle about the way women are portrayed in *Arthur* that sometimes bums me out. While allowing for the magazine's obvious love and homage to '70s hippie/yippie culture, it still seems like the women are often fetishized as the ultimate hippie chick: slender, nubile, long hair flowing in the wind, laid-back nature nymphs who are DOWN WITH FREE LOVE (aka an easy lay). Where are the trannies? Where are the daggers and the bears and the shaved-head/hairy-armpit girls?

And as far as American Apparel goes, it seems hypocritical for *Arthur* to raise the issue of sexual harassment in the military as a problem ("Are you there, Godsmack?", July 2006) and then run those ads. How much could AA possibly be paying that every alt-weekly across the country is willing to sell out their female readers for the ad revenue? And in contrast to the bronzed bikini beer babes who often grace the back covers of rock mags, these women don't even look like they're getting paid; the cheap aesthetic presents the idea that these women were willing to fuck some photographer they barely knew in a trashy motel room simply for the privilege of having their color picture plastered all over the billboards and magazines of the hip known-world. It's the art-jock version of *Girls Gone Wild*, with the implicit rationalization of 'well, nobody MADE them do it.'

Erika Anderson (Gowns)
Berkeley, CA

Arthur, Objectify Thyself

Christina's letter really irritated the hell out of me. First, it is not sexist for men to be men—to write and express themselves from their own perspective. A magazine made by a mostly male staff is not sexist for featuring men any more than a magazine run by black people featuring black people is racist. That is not to say that *Arthur* shouldn't pay more attention to women, it's just a really specious reactionary logic that simplifies it as sexist.

As for American Apparel: most of their models are actually employees or friends of the company. The quality and timing of their aesthetic may be questionable (the ironic porn thing might be passé), but it's hardly sexist. Their ads featuring men are JUST as sexual (maybe those ads haven't run in *Arthur*?), the men just as much objectified. The people in these photos are not just being objectified, they are objectifying themselves. The photos are meant to reflect a lover posing for another lover—in this case the advertising audience. I think it's creepy that people have a problem with other people expressing their sexuality, or seeing visual representations of sexuality. Why is being sexual seen as being sexist?

Anyhoo, I'm gay—and I have no problem with seeing hot guys in an ad. I certainly do not feel offended. If anything—people need to get naked more in ads, in public—anywhere, all the time.

Ralph McGinnis
New York, NY

Consider Us Hugged

Someone left the July *Arthur* at a cafe. It raised me from the doldrums to exhilaration. You should know that you are doing a remarkable job. I run an activist email network with a few people from other countries—people from their 20s to 80s in age, diverse racial backgrounds, etc. They will want to know about *Arthur*. Will you please give yourself and the others at *Arthur* Magazine a hug from me? Thanks.

Sandra Finley
Saskatoon, SK, Canada

Direct correspondence to editor@arthurmag.com or Arthur West Coast Editorial Offices, 3408 Appleton Street, Los Angeles, CA 90039. All correspondence will be considered for publication unless otherwise marked, and may be edited for clarity. Yep. You may continue to the next article now.



THE NEW HERBALIST
by Molly Frances

Wise Walnut



Illustration by Molly Frances

Fall is here. Embrace the wisdom of the squirrel and gather up your nuts. We need them more than they do.

One of the most ancient of foods, walnut fossils have been found dating from the Neolithic period over 8,000 years ago. Rumors of the walnut groves in the hanging gardens of Babylon have been circulating for some time, and King Solomon is said to have often strolled among his walnut trees "into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley" (Song of Solomon 6:11).

In the Middle Ages, the "Persian" walnut became known as the "English" walnut as colonial-minded English sailors carted off loads of the nutty bounty and spread them about Europe, and eventually the "new world."

Jupiter's royal acorns, as the ancient Romans liked to call them, bear a suspicious resemblance to the human brain. That makes walnuts brain food in every sense of the word. They're loaded with Omega 3 essential fatty acids, vitamin E, and minerals necessary for mental and heart health. It's no coincidence that as our intake of omega 3s have decreased drastically, depression and heart disease have risen. Get this slim jim: Your brain is 60% fat, and cell membranes will build themselves out of whatever fats are available. Omega 3s are the optimum choice, but most people fill up on omega 6s, found in polyunsaturated vegetable oils and animal products. An imbalance skewed towards Omega 6 fats are associated with inflamation, degenerative diseases, and mental disorders of all kinds, including increased violent activity. Sound like anyone you know?

Dr. Andrew Weil believes that the lack of Omega-3s in our diet is "the most serious nutritional deficiency we have in this country." This deficiency is believed to be responsible for a wide range of diseases such as alzheimer's, arthritis, ADD, diabetes, heart disease, PMS, and severe and manic depression. Omega 3 oils are found in oily fish, walnuts, flaxseeds, hemp seeds, and sea greens such as hijiki and kombu. They are essential for retinal function and vision, immunity, promoting good cholesterol, and cancer prevention.

Got the blues? Skip the sundae and go right to the nuts. Omega 3s stabilize moods and increase energy levels. They are also beauty oils, keeping skin youthful and glowing and hair soft and shiny. Get healthy and happy by replacing some of those 6s with 3s. How about a handful of walnuts as a snack or on a salad? How about some ground-up flax seeds? Why not? Let's all learn how to cook up some delicious sea greens like Hijiki; it's fun to say and more fun to eat.

Make certain to store shelled walnuts in the refrigerator (up to six months) to keep the oils from going rancid, as they can become carcinogenic. Chopped and ground nuts go bad more quickly than whole raw nuts. You can tell a bad bag of nuts by the smell—if they have the aroma of oil paint throw them away.

Enjoy a bag of organic raw walnuts or whole fresh walnuts from your local farmer's market. Nothing says "I have arrived" like a big bowl of walnuts on your table and a nutcracker placed just so. You'll have a potential moneymaker on your hands as well, playing the shell game with your friends. The increased walnut-fueled brain power is sure to benefit your sleight of hand.



Applied Magic(k)

By

The Center for Tactical Magic

The Center for Tactical Magic is a moderate internation think tank dedicated to the research, development and deployment of all types of magic in the service of positive social transformation. To find out more, check out tacticalmagic.org

Magic(k) Calls

The ancient oracles of Greece, which served as messaging centers between the gods and the mortals, did not shy away from associating metaphysical affairs with technological wizardry. Visitors to the oracles marveled as doors opened, fountains poured forth, and lights flickered all of the their own accord, thanks to an innovative use of hydraulics, pneumatics, levers, weights and balances. Such high-tech engineering (for the times, anyway) not only served to set an appropriate magical tone, but also held the potential to assist in conveying messages from the gods. Although more than 2,000 years old, this blend of magic(k) and tech stands in stark contrast to many of today's expressions of magic(k). What is it about technology and magic(k) that leaves so many magic(k) practitioners hiding in the folds of their anachronistic robes and tuxedos?

Arthur C. Clarke, author of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the inventor credited with the notion of global satellite communications, once said, "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." At the surface, such an assertion may seem simple enough; however, there are a few layers to excavate here. Some interpret this to mean we have reached an age where we are quite impressed by our own inventions. The workings of our gadgets have become increasingly imperceptible, if not due to sheer miniaturized size of the parts, then surely due to the veils of specialized knowledge. In the end, we don't know how a given technology, a cell phone for instance, even works nor do we particularly care so long as we can talk on it when we need to. We take it for granted that there is a technical logic behind the engineering of a cell phone.

Take a moment to consider what your Bluetooth *really* does.

For some, that brief insignificant moment of faith in technology is comparable to magic(k)—after all, many (if not most) magic (9►



Psychic Surveillance: Hi-tech wizardry and ESP come together at this mystic parlor in Stockton, CA. How can you augment your powers of perception?

Here are a few easy exercises to get you started.

As always, please let us know how it works out for you by emailing us at: goodluck@tacticalmagic.org

1

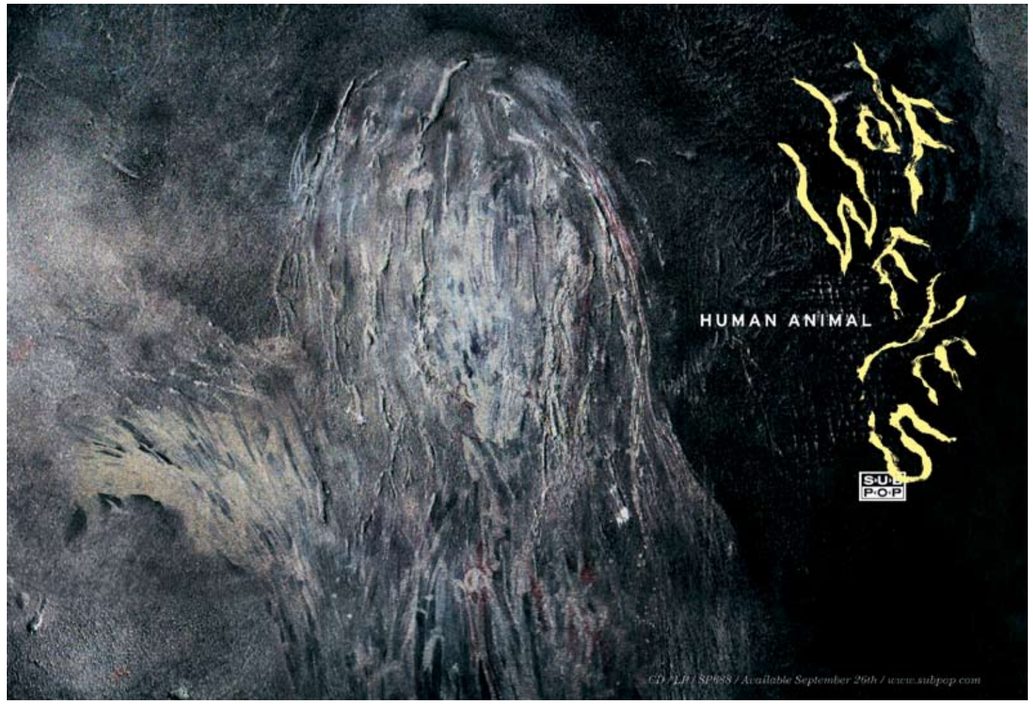
Calls from telemarketers and wrong numbers are usually considered to be a nuisance. Try thinking of them as an opportunity. The next time you receive an unwanted phone call use it as a chance to ask some lively questions. Your impromptu survey can cover any range of topics; however, in our experiences we've always had good success asking people about ghosts. Many folks will claim they don't believe in ghosts, but nearly everyone will tell you a tale of bizarre and unexplained phenomena. Try it out and see.

2

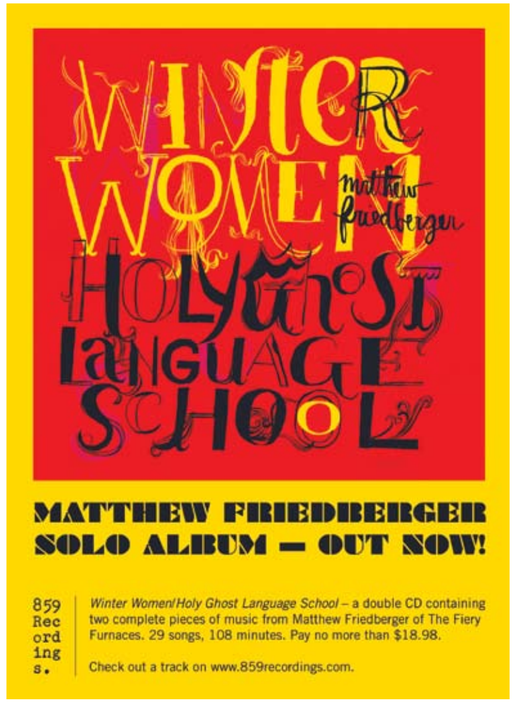
If you happen to be on a no-call list and are rarely haunted by telephone solicitors, try calling the service numbers for your phone company. These numbers are usually free, and more often than not, the person on the other end will appreciate the diversion from complaining customers. The ghost survey mentioned above is a good ice-breaker before asking about the company's policy for dealing with spooks of a federal nature. If the person you're talking to can't tell you the conditions under which your privacy is fed to the feds, ask to speak to someone who can.

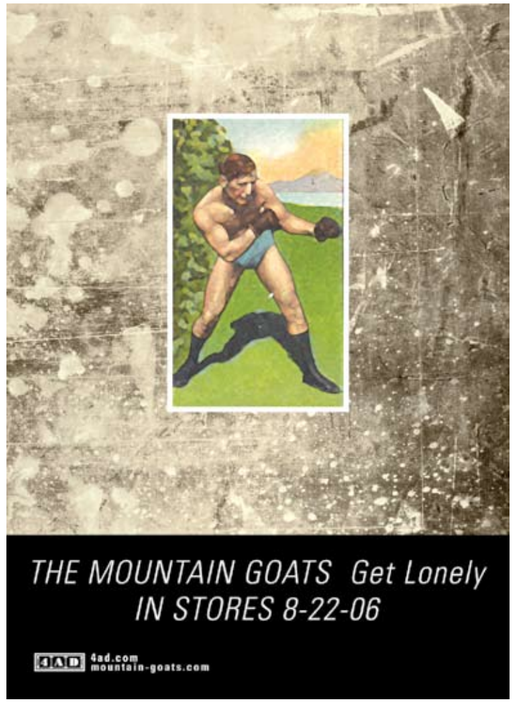
3

Peripherally, we may realize that a cell phone is, among other things, a noisemaker; however, it is a characteristic that receives our full attention only when it rings in awkward social situations like during a movie or a lecture. Under ordinary circumstances one tries to avoid such incidents. But perhaps there are other contexts where the disturbing cry of a cell phone can provide a well-deserved interruption. How about the wailing, beeping, and jamming of 10, or 50, or 500 cell phones all ringing at the same time? To cast such a cell spell requires little more than getting an assembly of cohorts to set their cell phone alarms to go off at an opportune moment. Schools, shopping centers, shareholders meetings, protests, parties—you name it; the possibilities are calling!











successfully performed along these very lines. Any enchantment whatsoever is overpowered by the puzzle that remains to be solved. The audience does not wonder if it is "real" magic(k); they wonder at how it is accomplished. While the overall effect may still be enough to satisfy and entertain, the method remains cloaked in secrecy and illusion. Likewise, when a technology performs its prescribed function, we tend not to ask any questions, and thus the mysteries of its inner workings are obscured to all but those with specialized knowledge. This certainly has some parallels with the way some view magic(k), equally in the realms of the occult, entertainment, and perhaps politics as well.

However, the magic(k) of a "sufficiently advanced technology" is not simply manifested solely by its ability to perform its prescribed function without one's understanding of how it works. Magic(k) teases questions of "what?" and "why" just as much as "how?" Aside from the general mystery of its inner workings, a cell phone appears to be no more magical than a wristwatch or a solar-powered calculator largely because of our familiarity with it and the banal circumstances under which it is used. But when we take a moment to really consider what a cell phone does, we begin to scrape away at another layer of meaning. We act like it's nothing, but when we use cell phones, our disembodied voices are transmitted invisibly via remote towers networked to celestial satellites (invented by Arthur C. Clarke, remember) floating somewhere in the heavens, before bouncing back to earth to be received by another living person located perhaps thousands of miles away. And this all happens in "real-time." Is it becoming more difficult to distinguish between technology and magic(k) yet? Well, let's keep going...

Let's jump back in time. We needn't go far. A few hundred years will do nicely. Now here you are: roaming through the public square wondering why all these people are hanging out socializing instead of home watching tv, when all of a sudden your friend from the future calls you, and your Bluetooth ear-set starts blinking and ringing. As you start to chat, you quickly realize that you are now the center of attention. When the barrel-chested blacksmith moseys on over and asks you what's going on, and you explain what a cell phone does (as mentioned above) do you think the nice folks from the past are going to find the whole affair rather ordinary?

Today, the notion of invisibly transmitting signals to communicate with beings from afar seems rather commonplace. But this is only a recent techno-historical development. In the past, such attempts were sure signs of mental instability, demonic possession or skilled sorcery. BUT they were not unimaginable, nor were they regarded as wholly impossible. Indeed, occult technologies were developed for just such a purpose. Crystal balls, Ouija boards, Tarot cards, and magic mirrors flashed glimpses and whispered insights from unseen communicators. Perhaps most famously, the mystical advisors to Queen Elizabeth I, Edward Kelly and John Dee, deftly divined an entire language (Enochian) with which to converse with angels and demons alike. Although the number of dropped calls from the Enochian Watch Towers was probably much higher than that of your average cell phone, the coverage range was apparently quite extensive, allowing communication to other beings on as many as seven planes of existence.

A few hundred years later, electric forces became harnessed for the first time in human history, and the telegraph, the telephone and the radio soon followed. Such inventions at once confirmed the possibility of body-less voices traveling through time and space, and opened the door to new expressions of magic(k) and mysticism. In much the same way that the invention of photography led to a whole range of spirit photos, trick photography, occult experimentation and illusions projected through the help of a "magic lantern" (an early slide projector), so too did the tech of telecom open the gates to a realm of fantastic enterprises. Stage magicians were quick to develop cunning tricks that relied on the covert and overt use of electric pulses, waves, and signals to convince audiences of the presence of all-knowing spirits and powerful mental faculties. So too did mediums embrace the electro-wizardry of the modern age. Like the stage magicians, psychics enhanced their performances with the covert collaboration of gadgets. In a manner perhaps reminiscent of the Greek oracles, parlor lights would dim and blacken, bells would ring in the distance, and voices would emerge from the shadows. Attempts at otherworldly communication led magicians, mystics and mediums to innovate on ancient divination techniques using new technologies. With the understanding that nearly anything can be used to divine messages, visions and insights, the spirit of electromancy was unleashed. Radios, phones, phonographs, recorders, and all sorts of metering devices began testing the metaphysical waters for evidence of ESP. Essentially, a new branch of extra-sensory perception began to grow: electro-sensory perception.

Although ESP is traditionally expressed as clairvoyance, precognition, and telepathy, at the core of the concept is an emphasis on the enhancement of our innate five senses. Sight beyond sight. Knowing what is hidden. Covert communication. To these ends, technologies have increasingly approached the potential of ESP. We have indeed augmented our senses beyond the ordinary limits of perception allowing us to see and hear over great distances. Although this may seem like a novel notion to the average consumer of communication services, the power and magic(k) of telecom tech certainly hasn't escaped the attention of the government, corporations, and the military.

The power and magic(k) of telecom tech certainly hasn't escaped the attention of the government, corporations and the military.

Of course we're not simply referring to the intense battles over public access to the airwaves and widespread demand for public control over the means of production (and communication), which you undoubtedly learned about in history class. Nor are we merely alluding to the fact that you have to pay to talk to your distant loved ones despite the fact that much of the telecom infrastructure was already paid for by tax dollars through government subsidies years ago. And neither are we questioning why it's illegal to broadcast a pirate radio station on an unoccupied niche of your FM dial. In fact, we're not even referencing a whole slough of occult conspiracies involving psychic vampires from business and politics who suck you dry of any dissenting desires.

As luck would have it, truth is often stranger than fiction. And it is no longer conspiracy theory but a matter of public record that the CIA and the Pentagon have poured millions of dollars into mind-control experiments like the infamous MK Ultra and the psychic spying programs that resulted in Remote Viewing. In addition, the Department of Defense's biggest budget-gobbler, DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) actively develops near-invisible surveillance cameras, spread spectrum data beams, spy satellites, "smart dust," "sentinel plants," sonar, radar, lidar and a host of "animal familiars" along with their robotic counterparts. Is that distinction between magic(k) and technology sufficiently fuzzy now?

Clearly, we don't need complicated data dowsers to find evidence of other occult dealings, secret pacts, and strange new powers. Indeed, we only need to look at a small, top-secret military unit of WWII code-breakers who were code-named - you guessed it! - MAGIC. Following the end of WWII, MAGIC ultimately became the NSA. The National Security Agency, which hosts the world's largest supercomputers and claims to employ the largest number of math wizards, monitors all forms of data transmission in an effort "to understand the secret communications of our foreign adversaries while protecting our own communications." Although "our" might seem to imply "American citizens" (especially since there are major federal laws prohibiting the NSA from spying on American citizens) apparently there is a sleight (heh) misunderstanding. In December of 2005, the *New York Times* broke a story detailing the NSA's monitoring of Americans' phone conversations. A day later, President Bush confessed to signing the order authorizing the illegal wiretapping. The method behind the trick was clearly exposed, yet the audience remained fascinated by the effects nonetheless. Despite the fact that he was caught with an impeachable ace up his sleeve during a dubious demonstration of ESP, the show (not to mention the war) trudges on. How is this possible? Psychic vampires? Mind control? Hmmm, maybe. Something certainly seems to have dulled our sensory perception.

We find a clue in yet one more layer of Arthur C. Clarke's analysis of magic(k) and technology. When we engage any "sufficiently advanced technology" we are quickly (and often unknowingly) entangled in a controlling web that covers at least seven planes of powerful, occult bureaucracy of which at least three are apparently governed by Misdirection, Malfeasance, and Machiavellian Machinations. In the end, we begin to understand that technologies can be used to control and oppress just as they can be used to liberate and make life more enjoyable. And if magic(k) is indistinguishable from technology, then the question that remains is, "How will you use it?"



Illustration by Jack Pollock



by
Douglas Rushkoff

Acceptance ≠ Acquiescence

I've been debating for a while about whether to do this. Whether to come right out and say it. On a certain level, it's like shouting "fire" in a crowded theater. What good is it to announce a problem if I don't have a ready solution at hand? Furthermore, what if sharing this information—this perspective on our predicament—simply exacerbates our paralysis to do anything about it. I mean, fascism breeds best in populations that have been stunned into complacency, cynicism, or despair.

(That's called a "buried lede"—a publishing term for hiding the main idea of a story deep within a paragraph. Editors don't like it because it makes it hard for the reader to figure out what an article is about. But I felt it necessary because, well, I'm not quite comfortable talking about it too directly, just yet. This fascism stuff.)

It all became blindingly clear to me the morning I found out Ken Lay was dead. I was listening to the radio—to a friend of mine, actually, reading the news report on NPR. He was explaining how the dishonored corporate elite criminal, the former CEO of Enron, had a fatal heart attack before he had the chance to spend the rest of his life in jail. Because of certain technicalities in the law, this also meant Lay's family would in all likelihood be able to keep the millions of dollars that would have otherwise been paid back to Enron employees and shareholders in court fines.

The newsreader opined that Lay's death might have been suicide, and not just for the money. Lay was in on those early secret energy industry meetings with Dick Cheney—the ones where they figured out oil prices and the Iraq War and other matters of state—and, facing prison, the fallen corporate superstar could have posed a security risk if he had leaked information about what had transpired to other prisoners or, worse, the FBI in trade for better living quarters.

But, given all that, I couldn't bring myself to believe Lay was dead at all. If you're that rich and powerful, why die? Why not just get a hold of some corpse, pay-off a coroner, move to an island and call it a day? This is no grassy knoll feat. It's not even *CSI*, but early 90's *Law & Order.* No big deal for a guy intimately connected with one of the most actively clandestine administrations in US history.

That same July morning, when news of North Korea's failed nuclear test launches were broadcast, I didn't feel sure I was being told what was happening, either. Not that news agencies can really know, either. Did they launch? Were they thwarted by a US counterstrike, or by their own ineptitude? Do they even know? Do we?

I'm not saying one thing or the other happened—just that I stare at the news and don't believe anything they're saying. I've got no idea. And it feels really weird.

I find I can trace this sense of uncertainty to the 2004 election. The 2000 election was crooked, but the fraud was rather out in the open. We watched hired thugs stop the Florida recount by trying to break into the room where the counting was happening—and thus delay the process long enough for the Supreme Court to choose Bush as the President. But the 2004 voter fraud in Ohio, fully documented by Robert Kennedy Jr., among others, was an entirely more hidden affair. Diebold voting machines, teams of fraud squads, and election officials too afraid that disclosure of what happened will turn people off voting forever.

Those of us who try to stay even remotely connected to what is going on in the world around us have enough hard evidence to conclude with certainty that voting in America has been systematically and effectively undermined by the party currently in power. In an increasing number of precincts, how people vote—if they are even allowed in—no longer has a direct influence on how their votes are tallied.

It's sad and confusing not to live in a democracy, anymore. And while it's quite plainly true, it's a bit too unthinkable for most sane people to accept. It goes in the same mental basket as more outlandish (if not unthinkable) thoughts—such as dynamite on the WTC or no airplane crashing into the Pentagon—even though, in this case, it's not conjecture, it's just plain real.

So what I'm coming to grips with is accepting that I don't live in a democratic nation, and that the propaganda state attempted in 1930's Europe did finally reach fruition here in the U.S., just as Henry Ford and those of his ilk predicted.

Maybe I'm just old, and have a very idealistic view of democracy. When I was a kid, we were all told that this is a government of the people, and that our votes provided a check on the power of our leaders. That's why we called them "elected." Or maybe it's just naïve to think that representative democracy could have worked the way it was presented to us.

The other side—the fascist side—does have an argument to make, and they've been making it since Woodrow Wilson was president. Having run on a "peace" campaign, Wilson later decided that America needed to get involved in World War I. So, with the help of one of the great Public Relations masters of all time, Edward Bernays, he created the Creel Commission, whose job was to change America's mind.

Bernays, like the many political propagandists who followed, honestly believed that the masses are just too stupid to make decisions for themselves—particularly when it involved global affairs or economics. Instead, an enlightened and informed elite (corporate America) needs to make the decisions, and then "sell" them to the public in the form of faux populist media campaigns. This way, the masses feel they are coming up with these opinions, themselves.

Truly populist positions, on the other hand—such as workers' rights or minority representation—must be recontextualized as the corruption of the public by elite "special interests" or decadent social deviants. Throughout most of history, these scapegoats were the Jews, but now it's mostly gays and liberals. By distracting the masses with highly emotionally charged issues like flag-burning or gay marriage, those in power consolidate their base of support while developing a new mythology of state as religion.

As long as they do all this, they don't have to worry about how people vote, or what might be happening on the ground. "Unregulating" the mediaspace turns the fourth estate (the news agencies) into just another arm of the corporate conglomerates that fascism was invented to serve. (Mussolini called it "corporatism," don't forget.)

The last and most crucial step in creating a truly seamless fascist order, though, is to frighten the intellectuals, students, and artists from seeing the world as it is and sharing their sensibilities with one another. Hell, calling America's leaders "a fascist regime" can't be good for business. The only place I'm allowed to write this way is on my blog or here in *Arthur*—and neither pays the bills.

Besides: why rock the boat? I may not have the right to vote, anymore, but I'm being kept comfortable enough. Like others of my class, I have a roof over my head. I'm crafty enough to get paid now and again for a book or talk or comic series. And the state is functioning well enough that I can afford a tuna sandwich and walk around my neighborhood eating it without getting whacked with a rock or a grenade. As far as history goes, that's pretty good.

> If American democracy is a failed experiment, should we just let these guys run the country as long as they let us eat?

So was democracy a failed experiment? Should we just let these guys run the country as long as they let us eat? Clearly, they're not scared of us or what we might be saying about them. In fact, their best argument that we haven't descended into fascism is the fact that we're allowed to distribute columns like this one. How could we be living in a totalitarian propaganda state if there are articles pronouncing the same? Because fascism looks different every time around. 1930s fascism failed because it was too obviously repressive. Today's fascism works because it has turned the mediaspace into a house of mirrors where nothing is true and everything is permissible. The fact that there are plenty of blogs and even major books saying what's happening and still it doesn't matter is proof that it has worked.

But there is hope. It's not just the radicals and militias who are alarmed, but mainstream congresspeople and government wonks. I, myself, have been approached by two federal commissions and three members of congress (from both parties) for help understanding what they already deem to be actionable offenses against the American people by some of our leaders. They are disturbed by the disinformation campaign leading up to the Gulf War, voter fraud, and the way Americans have been frightened into supporting the curtailment of civil rights.

Surprisingly, most of my conversations with these patriotic people involve two main concerns. First, they have been ostracized by their peers for their views. This has created some urgency, for they fear they will not get enough party support for re-election if they don't succeed in their efforts in the next few months. Second, and more troublingly, they are afraid to disillusion America's youth. Isn't there a way to fix this problem, they wonder, without raising an entire generation of Americans in environment of acknowledged voter nullification? And what of our reputation in the world? Which is more damaging to democracy: voter fraud, or the public awareness of voter fraud?

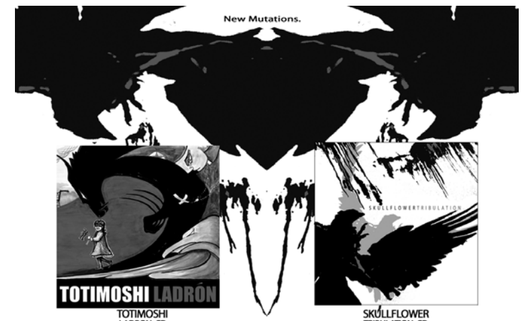
To this, we simply must conclude that the reality of voter fraud is more dangerous than any associated disillusionment. To worry about the impact on public consciousness is to get mired in the logic of public relations—and that's what got us into this mess to begin with.

It's time to get real, and either fight (through the courts, if possible) to reinstate the rule of law as established by the Constitution, or accept that Enlightenment-era democracy simply doesn't work and move into a new phase of government by decree or market forces or whatever it is that comes next.

In any case, it serves no one to have a "pretend democracy" that's actually something else. I'm going to stop denying what's going on here, and use what influence I have with lawmakers and intelligence workers to get them to do the same. Instead of trying to feel better about all this, I'm going to allow myself and everyone around me to feel worse.

Indeed, the bad news is the good news. Total disillusionment, though momentarily painful, is utterly liberating and probably required. Acceptance isn't acquiescence at all; it's the first step towards reconnecting with a reality that can and must be changed. If we're going to get back on the horse, we've got to acknowledge that we've fallen off.

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SKULLFLOWER
TRIBULATION CD
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Ragged Glory

HOW COMETS ON FIRE & HOWLIN' RAIN'S Ethan Miller GOT HIS COSMIC CALIFORNIAN YAWP

by
Trinie Dalton
photography by
Edan Batki

My adoration for Comets on Fire, Six Organs of Admittance, Howlin' Rain and The Colossal Yes — all bands that either include or are tangentially related to cover boy Ethan Miller — stems from my love of music that reminds me of the Pot Growing Capital of America, Humboldt County. As a native Californian, any music that conjures up the Redwood forest—its clean, pine-scented air, abundance of ferns and fungi, and a high tree canopy providing year-round shelter from the elements—causes me to pause as I grind through traffic in Los Angeles and wonder: Why do I live in such a hellhole? (This doesn't mean I'm moving up north to chain myself to a tree or that I bust out bootlegs from cheesy Phish wannabes, however.)

Ethan Miller's music in his bands Comets on Fire and Howlin' Rain does yeoman's work by evoking his native Humboldt region. His guitar playing and vocals attest to a magical and ancient ability to conjure up place, recalling that golden hour in American rock history: San Francisco in the late '60s, the heyday of Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and the Grateful Dead, to name but a few. On the other hand, Miller is audibly influenced by Japanese freak-out messiahs like High Rise, Ghost, White Heaven, Acid Mothers Temple and Keiji Haino. Those inspirations supply the proverbial fireworks inside Miller's balmy, casual Northern California sound. Consider it a Pacific Rim/Ring of Fire kind of thing.

Comets on Fire have built their sound upon the excitement and uncertainty of impending disaster. Their fourth studio album, *Avatar* (Sub Pop), sounds, at first, less chaotically punky than their previous records (2001's *Comets on Fire*; 2002's *Field Recordings of the Sun*; 2004's *Blue Cathedral*), but close listening reveals its deeper strangeness. The new album has a more professional studio sound, yet Avatar also features powerful ballads whose lyrics has the power to hypnotize much like magic spells. In "Swallow's Eye," Miller sings: "Eye of the moon will turn the tides/Leaves of the orchard beckon the blight/Spite of our circle, ever on/Only a river can carry a song."

While Comets' awkward-but-beautiful tendency towards demolishing harmonic riffs and jams with screeching, scary guitar solos still reigns, Avatar has clearer piano, more bass, and, most notably, Miller singing sans effects. His earthy rasp is reminiscent of Janis Joplin, Joe Cocker, Rod Stewart, and Ozzy. But when Comets played ArthurFest in 2005, Ethan was singing at maximum capacity, and it was impossible to understand one word he was saying through the distortion of the Echoplex. Now, the ability to understand Ethan Miller's lyrics is a breakthrough, adding poetic and political significance to an already heavy experience.

Miller's lyrics come through even clearer on Howlin' Rain's self-titled debut on Birdman Records. Howlin' Rain is an Ethan-fronted revolving posse including old buddies Ian Gradek, Mike Jackson, Tim Daley and Sunburned Hand of the Man's John Moloney. They have a real California-country feel, part Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, part original Charlatans, with the feel-good vibe of the Doobie Brothers. I sampled the Howlin' Rain LP while crossing over mountainous Route 299, through Weaverville, deep in the Shasta-Trinity wilderness famous for its thriving BigFoot population. With the trees rolling past, a river to stop at and dip into, and some beer and trail mix for nourishment, the tunes sounded pretty idyllic. Howlin' Rain's lyrics are another matter: doomsday vibes, as in "Calling Lightning With A Scythe," set far off from pastoral troubadour musings: "We are only slaves/To our ghostly arms and legs/Got us dancing in our graves/And then lay around in the wreckage/Of this pitiful little world." Bluesy murder ballads and songs about the apocalypse are further disturbed by Miller's guitar solos that wreck the Neil Young-ian peace and harmony that the songs present on the surface.

Ethan grew up in Eureka, the Humboldt County seat, but now lives in Oakland. I had a fantasy of driving up to some remote redwood cabin to drink gin with him for the interview, but since he's busy enjoying Bay Area city life with his wife and working a day job, we enjoyed a long, fun phone conversation. Ethan Miller's lucidity, in his interview as well as in his music, reassures me that there are good things happening, in an age that can sometimes feel overwhelmed by corporate dread.

ARTHUR: Is it difficult to be in two bands, since it takes up two places in your brain?

ETHAN: The logistics are difficult, but artistically, it's easier. There's no band that everything you want to do is right for. A band has its own particular persona and willpower, especially a band like Comets on Fire. We can hardly steer that thing.

The first Comets on Fire album sounds so live. And on the CD, after the album ends, you have the whole thing live. They sound so similar. The studio mastery of Avatar is a real breakthrough, it sounds way more crafted.

That's because the first album was recorded on a four-track in a garage back in '99. That was the sound we were going for. Thankfully it's not difficult to capture the sound of the garage. That's how we sounded live then as well. For all practical purposes, we were making a record of live music, playing songs live for the recording. We did it, and we didn't want to do that again. We wanted to do something else. This is Comets' fourth trip into the studio. Lots of bands mostly love playing live, they just see the studio as, Let's get in the studio and get it over with. They try to portray their live sound as genuinely as possible. But we're admirers of the great album as well.

We wanted people to hear everything on this album, the stuff that people recognize from classic rock records, the really gritty, off-the-cuff psych records. We tracked the record for about seven days at Prairie Sun studios, in this old converted chicken farm. We stayed in the cabin guesthouse, in such an incredible environment. We'd never had that lock-in before, where we didn't have to go to work the next day. Usually it's like, After work I'll go back and do vocals. This time, we got to be artists for seven days, which allowed for the recording process to be more stressful, for us to put more energy into it, and to put more pressure on ourselves to make a great album. That's the life. Just remember to eat, and restock the fridge full of booze.

Did you play in bands in high school?

Oh yeah, the first band I was in was with Ian, from Howlin' Rain. Rock, Pop, Punk whatever. It was good for learning the ins and outs and the essentials of being in a group, trying to get a vision.

Did you always know that hippie and punk are two sides of the same coin?

Not always. In the town that we grew up in, all of us, in Eureka and Humboldt—and I think probably it's true for Noel in Ojai—we were raised on the so-called punk scene and punk ethics or whatever about music and stuff, in other words: Hippie music does suck. Today, if you play a bar in Los Angeles or a show in Portland, yeah there's a lot of beards and longhairs and pot smoking and little leather bandanas: hippie stuff. People look like they were right out of the Woodstock movie or something. But in the '80s, and the '90s too to some extent, the people that were looking like that were the leftover hippies. The burnouts. And I swear, Humboldt, probably other than a few hives in Marin or in Southern California, Humboldt was the last bastion of hippiedom. It wasn't very cool to the punks. The Dead, classic rock, any of that stuff? Our reaction was basically that punk rock ethic: Fuck the dinosaurs.

So there was that for all of us: that specter, that kind of mythos hanging over our heads. But you know, I grew up with such an instinctual love of classic rock, even more than punk rock or anything. And some of the hippie bands included in that, that I personally began to shed that, especially when I got to Santa Cruz. You know? Fuck it. Going around barefoot, having your dog out with the neighbor's dog on the front porch, living like that... I don't need to be 'cool' anymore. I'm getting a little older. I'm not 20 or 18 anymore when you're desperate to be cool or punk rock. As you get older, you just become more accepting. Of everything. And in music, I think becoming more accepting of everything draws you closer to understanding the core energy source of music. The core energy that totally invigorates our DNA when we hear it, it's the same in Little Richard and Black Flag and Public Enemy and Mozart.

Did getting into Japanese rock help there, in re-assessing music that you might have previously discounted because of its hippie-ness? In the way that the French taught us how great Jerry Lewis is.

I hadn't thought about that but that probably is totally true. I remember when I was getting turned on to a lot of that stuff that the more I tried to dig into the Japanese PSF scene [PSF being the seminal Japanese psych label - ed.] and stuff like that, the more interviews I read with those guys... Like Keiji Haino is super-obsessed with Jim Morrison and the Doors, I think I read that. That Haino, one of his greatest inspirations was like some free jazz thing—right of course—and some Japanese creepy Dadaist anarchist dance movement—okay, okay—and then... Jim Morrison and the Doors! And you're like, Wait, what? Hang on. The Doors are just bastardized in this country, especially by elitist people who are a lot of time the buyers of PSF records, or the people you might sit around talking about this stuff with. And then you search that back a little bit and you got Iggy Pop saying "Yeah man my whole inspiration for my thing was Jim, he opened all those doors."

So yeah, the second fold of that whole concept of trying to re-see something through their eyes, or see new roots that they put together off those original embedded roots. ... You don't have to draw your inspiration to make noise music from listening to noise. Or make psych music by listening to psych records. Or make heavy music by listening to Blue Cheer or Black Sabbath all the time. In fact, you're probably gonna make MORE enriched, heavy music if you try to take core elements and core vibes and core emotions out of something that's completely the opposite! And start confusing those genes in your music.

And that's another good lesson from the Japanese dudes. I'm not sure if they set out purposefully to make these crazy mutated babies like that out of the music, like "Let's mix the Grateful Dead and the Doors and then we'll make the most harrowing, deconstructed inside-out crazy rock music," because I think they're still, especially in the '80s when a lot of those Japanese guys made their masterpieces and really changed rock music from behind the Pacific Curtain over there or whatever...I think Japan was still a really different place from the West, really upside-down to us. And same with us to them, and it may have been a truly more natural and strangely different reading they were making of things.

Did you cultivate your scratchy vocal stylings? Do you have to breathe steam like Ozzy?

This is how I naturally sing. The falsetto without scratch, when I'm trying to sing a little calmer and on key, is usually something I have to work at and it still isn't exactly what I'd like to sound like in that range. The scratchy, going-hoarse voice is my most comfortable and natural singing thing. As long as I don't have to strain for volume over the amps and drums, it really doesn't bother me to sing like that all night long. My favorite singers are people that I can't imitate. I haven't been able to take much from them, except learning how they let their voices be their own, and how they're honest with what they show of themselves. Grace Slick, Howlin' Wolf, Stills, Young, Crosby, Dylan, Judee Sill, Elvis, Tom Jones, Exuma, Janis Joplin. I love all those voices and would love to sing like any of them, but I can't and won't be able to no matter how hard I try, because they express something far deeper then just great singing. That's all a singer can try to do, or really all anyone should try to do, be something more interesting and honest than just being good.

Who were your earliest guitar heroes? You've developed a signature guitar style for sure, but on the Avatar and Howlin' Rain there are differing guitar sounds too.

Everybody loves Hendrix. His guitar playing was so all encompassing. I love his out stuff, really out, when he's playing with distortion. Not that he ever got super-super out, but man, "Star-Spangled Banner" gets pretty fucking out. His use of distortion, even more than his ingenious virtuosic playing, no one is ever gonna replicate that. There are some great ideas inside his experiments with distortion.

There's also John Chipolina, from Quicksilver Messenger Service. They were one of the early groups to do really long jams, like the Dead, part of the Haight-Ashbury scene. Their albums never translated that well, but Chipolina's guitar is super-beautiful. He's one of the great tremolo players of all time. He mastered the whammy bar. That's something that I really like, and have always experimented with. Also, Michio Kurihara, who plays with Ghost, and White Heaven. Check out the albums Out, or Next to Nothing. They're totally crucial. They were crucial when Comets was making the first two albums. Noel, Flashman, and I were really into him. He continued the Chipolina legacy. Neil Young, a fucking great guitar player. And Bert Jansch.

What is it about Comets On Fire that makes it psych rock? To me, it's a blend of long jam-outs with noise elements that make the music sound contemporary. It definitely goes back to Hendrix, the quintessential, blues-based psych rock man.

The best thing you can say about something is that it sounds like the people it admires and borrows from, but it also sounds like itself. All the classic guys did that. Hendrix took a look at Albert King and was like, I want to do that riff. So he sounds like Albert King but he has his own thing. Those guys were trying to encompass the history of what was inspiring them, in order to make their own mark, their own contribution. You deify these people and think that they're geniuses who fell from the sky, when in reality they just practiced, and tried to incorporate everything. They were never ashamed to rip off what they loved.

I was thinking about that the other day. I was reading this Beatles thing. They're the ones who you wonder, How did Lennon and McCartney write this shit? It must have come from god. But no. Really, you read an interview with Paul, and he's like, "Yeah when we wrote some famous song, John and I were listening to the Everly Brothers and we decided to rip off their vocals." Or, "The Byrds were playing these riffs, so we took those, put them together..."

There's this idea that even the best musicians, or especially the best, would listen to





The best thing you can say about something is that it sounds like the people it admires and borrows from, but it also sounds like itself. All the classic guys did that. They were never ashamed to rip off what they loved.

photo by Mark Sullo

their favorite music, then try to take things from it to create the most original music. It presents this idea that has become a total no-no in rock music, a faux pas, because everyone wants to be so original. The idea that ALL the riffs, ALL the chords changes, ALL the melodies, ALL the songs are already out there, and that musicians are engaged with this ever-changing, ever-moving history that has no beginning and no end, so you should just grab things, and make them your own. Fuck bands who are trying to be, like, a gift from god.

Your live shows are so sonically entertaining. You said once that it's easy to crank up your amps and blow everyone away, but it's harder to make a song that people actually want to listen to. I think that's an apt description of both your bands, because there is a careful balance of noise and harmony. I like listening to Lightning Bolt, for example, but I can only handle so much.

There's a fear of being really loud and chaotic, sonically aggressive, that you risk hitting people over the head. Burnout is the same with anything, really. Even if you listen to your favorite Dylan song over and over again, you're like what the FUCK? That harmonica solo cracks into you and you're like, Oh My God. The majority of people gravitate towards melody, there's something about it. A great chord, a great hook, a great coda, a great guitar solo, these things intertwine into this invisible DNA, something that we relate to as humans.

Did you try to make Avatar more pleasing to the ear, as defined by what you just said?

We tried to play differently, but not to please an audience. You can try to intellectually go in a direction with music, but you can only do that so far, because you'll betray your true urges. Sometimes it's good to fight your creative inertia, if you're like, I'm in a rut. But on the other side is your musical essence, and you don't want to betray that just for the sake of always going against what you've done. We felt like on Field Recordings and Blue Cathedral, we got as heavy and wild as we could get while still being true to our essence. We still liked melody and hooks, and we didn't want to become some atonal noise band. It wouldn't be true to our make-up as a group, at least not yet. Maybe in the future. At the same time, after songs like "Black Poodle" or "Whiskey River," Chasny and I felt that we'd accomplished

our heaviest riffs. We wrote those songs as fast as we could, thrashed them out as hard as we could.

There's a risk of trying to out-do yourself the Woody Allen thing. Like, dude, you made Annie Hall. You don't make Annie Hall better by making it over and over again. Because it was perfect, or it captured what he was doing at the time. I think we only made one attempt on Avatar to out-rock our hardest rocking song, with the song "Holy Teeth." Avatar sounds different because there's more piano, more paths that we tried to go down. For Field Recordings and Blue Cathedral, we wrote the riffs and got the songs about 60% to 75% done, then left the architecture open-ended, unfinished. We'd jam that out, improvising. That's the Neil Young method, and a lot happens by happy accident in the moment of creation. If we don't have something for this part or this ending, then

We live in are some of the most wondrous times ever in the world. But in other ways, they're horrifying and dark, and it's seems like we're on the edge of some abyss. Our shoes have both the gold dust and shit on them.

something will happen. Trusting in chaos, or randomness, that something of substance will occur, is a more thrilling thing to hear on a record than rehearsed perfection. Some of our earlier songs were written, recorded, and finished in one day. Drinking beers and recording on a four-track in the garage is an extreme version of that. After three albums of that, we didn't want to tread over the same ground. Things are a lot more experimental for us now, since they're new. A lot of people don't want to face improvisation, especially in a studio, but we felt there was a boldness and courage in doing that, which would shine on the albums and give them heart.

How do you answer people who peg your music as stoner music, or drug music?

There is nothing to do about that but say there is no connection between us and drugs. God forbid you should ever mention that you did drugs in association with your music… 'Yeah man, we took a hit of pot and said let's work on a song.' Then you're [positioned as] 'wild druggies.' Dude, come on. Every schoolteacher, fireman and cop in America is smoking pot after work or doing a little coke at a party every once in a while. It doesn't make them a 'druggie cop' or a 'junkie schoolteacher.'

"Stoner" was a pejorative when I was growing up.

Yeah, it was the dudes who had long hair and Levi's and jean vest jackets who would beat you up in high school, listened to Slayer, banana comb, be on speed… I dunno. I think it's passe as can be to hear about bands doing drugs. What the fuck? You can do a bunch of drugs, but how are you gonna do all that and try to be making records 20 years from now?

Howlin' Rain is all about being easy on the ear, minus some intense guitar solos. Is Howlin' Rain a counterbalance to Comets' tamed chaos?

Yes, Howlin' Rain was light to the dark of Comets. It's the old yin and yang thing, the good and evil within us all. Creatively, I am simply trying to acknowledge, accept, and develop both those sides. Though, Comets is beginning to develop both those sides within itself as an entity. It's usually in fairly dark ways. So, I still enjoy playing blues field and sunshine music with Howlin' Rain.

How far back do those Howlin Rain songs go? Is that stuff you've had for a while, or…?

There's probably not a single song on there that I just popped up with and was like, here it is, I just wrote it. I try to work in the ways that I was taught to write in school, for creative writing or whatever: If I get ideas, if I'm just brainstorming ideas, I'll just kind of do outlines and snippets and just get shit into notebooks… Some of the things that I wrote on there, the lyrics were from a different time. "Show Business," that song is basically a kind of love song or an anti-love song, or just the disappointment of chance meetings and lovers and the comings and goings of them, and the sourness that come with that, as well as exhilaration. That's something that I wrote some years ago. Now, I'm married, but I wasn't always, you know? And that came from then. I don't know if I'd still write a song like that now, but then it's almost more interesting for me to grapple with this theme now, it makes the emotions even more mixed and strange for me to deal with.

With Howlin' Rain, especially Howlin' Rain live, you have this summery, mellow-rock style. It reminds me of California. Do you think there's such a thing as California music?

I was trying to make it represent the nature and vibe of California, musically. I wanted to sonically represent the history of California bands.

What were you listening to when you wrote the Howlin' Rain songs?

A lot of early and mid-period Fleetwood Mac, Exuma, MIJ, Stephen Stills, Terry Allen, Crosby, Clapton, Be Bop Deluxe, Bill Fay, Terry Reid, Cat Stevens. I was reading Brautigan and Pocket Book pulp crime novels. I tried to think about doing things with the music or arrangements that, normally, in a really heavy rock setting, I would be a little embarrassed to do or would think was too soft and not brutal enough, like multi-part sax horn arrangements and goofy, funky breaks. That's something that I got from listening to Stills or Graham Nash. They were brilliant musicians and songwriters, putting down these breaks or hooks that were just unabashedly cheesy, like the Spanish singing and do-do-do-do part at the end of "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes." At first, you're like, This is so sugary and sweet it's embarrassing, it's unashamed that it's a nakedly super-indulgent fun part. Once you let your guard down to a part like that, it can be one of the most beautiful musical moments. I was trying to let my guard down with Howlin' Rain, to parts that aren't constantly stormy and tough, but are cheesy, smelly, and a good time, in efforts to allow something great to come of those parts. Unguarded emotion, even if at times it gives you kind of a goofball feeling.

You mentioned the time you spent in Santa Cruz. What did you get out of being there?

Santa Cruz is a weird place. With Residual Echoes and Mammatus and some of the Holy Mountain stuff that John's putting out from Santa Cruz and Comets on Fire coming from there and Wisp coming from there and these other groups, I think that people in a very small way are starting to look back and go, "Whoa there was some sort of scene or happening or heyday in Santa Cruz that produced this stuff." Well, it sure fuckin' didn't feel like it. There was a scene of friends, and a few restaurants and bars that would let you do shows. But certainly not something that was sustaining its own life on a larger scale and reaching out a wider audience until you could get a record out into the world for people to hear. It's weird that way. I think Santa Cruz is probably more influential to us by its natural setting and its vibes and good friends rather than being part of a really crazy music scene that was burgeoning there.

How do you put up with living in a big city now?

Once in a while, on a Saturday night or something, you go and get off. Go to an art opening and see some friend's stuff and then go see one band and then skip over to a bar and see another band and it's some rad band and you're like, This is awesome, this is what's so cool about living in the city! But on the other end, yeah, commuting for work, exhaust, two hours a day spent in traffic? I'm just not a very city-oriented person. Neither is my wife. We live in Oakland, for one. That's one way to put up with it, is not living right in the middle of the hustle and bustle of things. But still, I'd probably gravitate out of the city once I get the chance. You can live in a small town and be a quarter of a mile from the thickest, most beautiful Sequoia redwood groves, old growth redwood giants. Granted, what you're trading in is a paycheck. [laughs] You won't be able to buy music anymore, you'll be making six dollars an hour, drinking Hamm's ice red wine.

I remember being in high school, getting high in the forest, and listening to the Jefferson Airplane, being really addicted to that state of drugged bliss. Howlin' Rain has that blissed-out sound, but lyrically it's more metal.

Well, these are my times, we don't live in the Seventies, and I don't want to say, Everybody, don't worry be happy or something. When I have my moment to say something that's going on the record, I want to show contrasts. These times that we live in are some of the most incredibly enlightened, beautiful, awesome, and wondrous times ever in the world. But in other ways, they're horrifying and dark, and it's seems like we're on the edge of some abyss. I wanted to make something that represented that. Our shoes have both the gold dust and shit on them. I was playing with that idea on the Howlin' Rain album. People feel related to this modern, beautiful world, while in the back of their heads, they get the sense that things are fucking crazed. People's eyes are open to that duality. And America finally has its eyes open to that, more in the last decade at least, on a mass scale.

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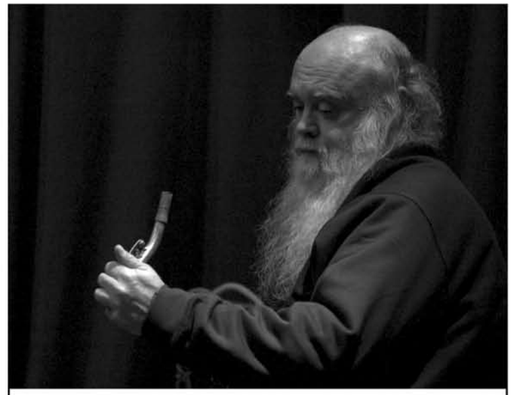
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MY MOTHER WAS THERE TO HELP ME MOVE BACK TO ILLINOIS.

You don't have to do it.

THE DAY I WAS SCHEDULED TO PICK UP THE TRUCK WAS ALSO THE DAY I WAS SCHEDULED TO HAVE THE VENEERS PUT ON.

Spending this much money, it could help move me out into the world.

THE DENTIST'S SECRETARY HAD CALLED THE DAY BEFORE. SHE TOLD ME THAT THE DENTIST BLOCKED OUT AN HOUR WITH NO OTHER PATIENTS.

You don't have to do it.

HE WANTS TO CONCENTRATE ON YOU TOMORROW, SHE SAID.

My front teeth have been filed down.

MY DENTIST WAS BLANDLY ARROGANT, LIKE ALL THE DENTISTS I'VE HAD.

HE CASUALLY TOOK THE VENEERS OUT OF HIS POCKET AND HELD THEM LIKE CHANGE.

I CUPPED MY HANDS. THE VENEERS WERE WEIGHTLESS, AGLOW.

When I was a kid, there was a bank sign in town that had a little mansard roof. In summer, I'd stand under the sign. The sidewalk was stained purple with mulberries.

HOW DIFFERENT THIS WAS FROM MY LAST VISIT, WHEN MY TEETH WERE FILED DOWN AND SWEAT POPPED FROM MY FOREHEAD.

The world needs good teachers.

I HELD OUT MY HANDS; HE TOOK THE VENEERS. THIS WAS MY FINAL APPOINTMENT.

I thought that was where the bank secretly kept all the money— in the sign.

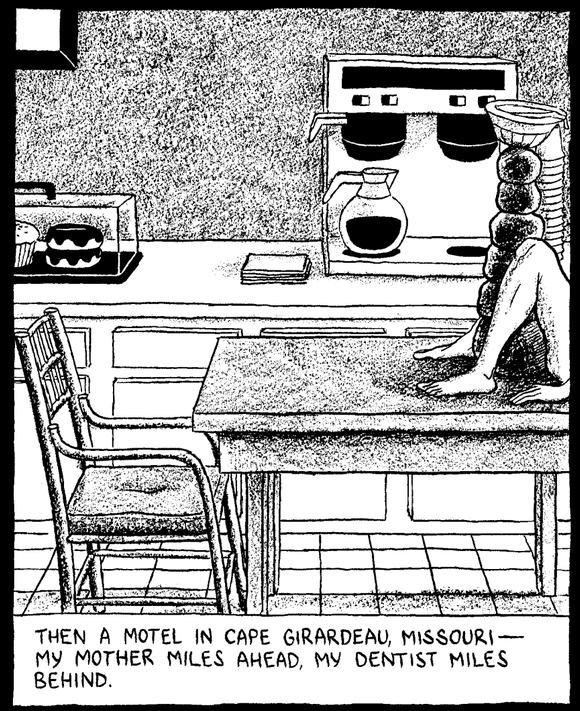
HE APPLIED ADHESIVE TO THE PLANED TEETH AND PRESSED THE VENEERS AGAINST THEM. HE USED ALL HIS STRENGTH, YET I FELT NOTHING.

The world needs good teachers.

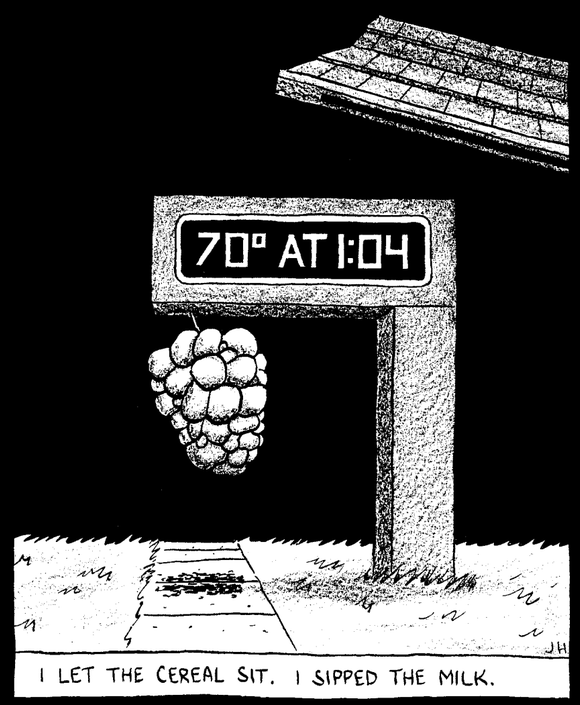
I HAD PICTURED MYSELF CRYING WHEN I FIRST SAW MY NEW TEETH.

INSTEAD, CLUTCHING THE MIRROR, MY IMMEDIATE AND OVERWHELMING REACTION WAS FEAR. THE VENEERS WOULD FALL OUT; I JUST KNEW IT.

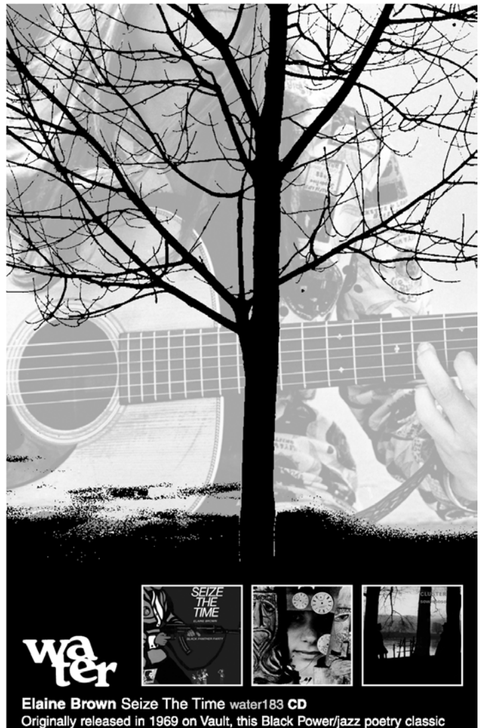

THE REAR LIGHTS OF THE TRUCK DISAPPEARED IN THE RAIN.


THEN A MOTEL IN CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI— MY MOTHER MILES AHEAD, MY DENTIST MILES BEHIND.


THE DONUTS AT THE CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST BAR WERE HARD.


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I LET THE CEREAL SIT. I SIPPED THE MILK.


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Elaine Brown Seize The Time water183 **CD**
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Ruthann Friedman A Hurried Life water185 **CD**
A collection of previously unreleased demos, home recordings, and lost songs circa 1965-1970 from Ruthann's personal archive. Includes detailed song notes by Ruthann, unseen photos, and the original version of "Windy."

Cluster Sowiesoso water186 **CD**
Moebius and Roedelius, a.k.a. Cluster, released this album on Sky in 1976. While some tracks contain early electronic percussion and others beatless ambience, the album is overall melodic, atmospheric and considered to be one of their finest works.



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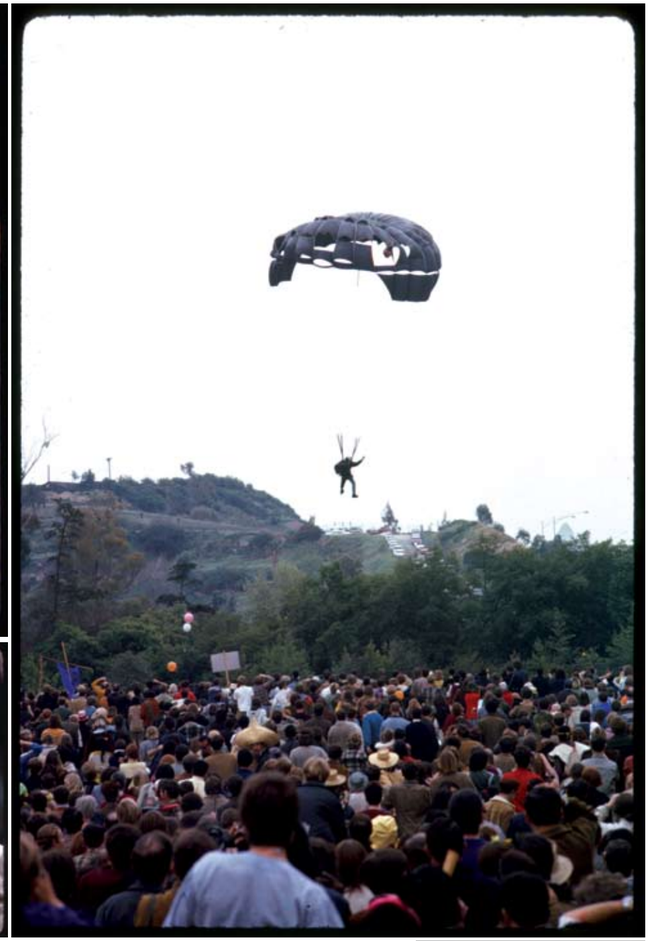
Scenes from a 1967 Los Angeles Love-In

photography by Seymour Rosen
text by Kristine McKenna

People get high these days, but something tells me getting high in the '60s was a completely different story. That's one of many thoughts that crossed my mind in perusing this remarkable series of photographs taken at a Love-In in Los Angeles' Griffith Park in 1967, the "Summer of Love." The '60s have been the butt of many jokes in the ensuing decades, but there's no denying the fact that the people in these pictures look absolutely *ecstatic*. One imagines this was partly attributable to the vigorous consumption of drugs intrinsic to the period, but









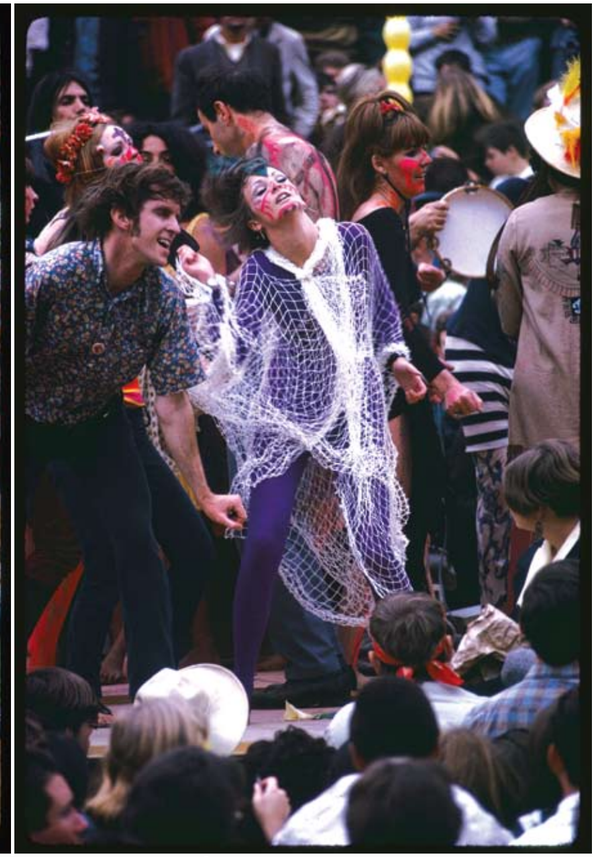


it also has to do with the fact that the hope that a better world could be achieved hadn't yet been bludgeoned into submission by the powers that be. Yes, we'd lost some important leaders—JFK in 1963, Malcolm X in 1965—but none of the zeitgeist-altering bad stuff—the Manson Family, Altamont, etc.—had gone down yet. We still had Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, (both of whom were killed in 1968), free love was flourishing without the specter of AIDS, the corrosive after-math of heavy drug use hadn't revealed itself, Jimi, Janis and Jim hadn't O.D.'d yet.

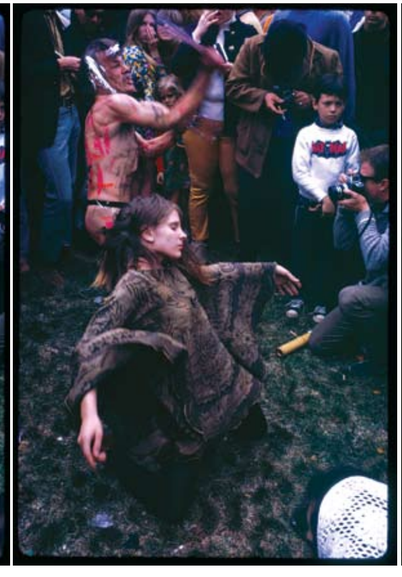
Thus, the Love-Ins at Griffith Park (there were two significant ones, the first on March 26th, Easter Sunday, the second on July 23rd), can be interpreted today as the calm before the storm, and its participants like so many fragile flowers whose time in bloom was soon to end; we see a Middle Eastern man in a pink bunny suit; bi-racial couples (a big deal at the time) arm in arm, straight people and full-on freaks dancing side by side, hippie couples with long-haired children in tow, people dressed in extravagantly original costumes—you can almost smell the incense and patchouli oil.

These pictures were taken by one of L.A.'s great unsung geniuses, Seymour Rosen. Born in Chicago in 1935, Rosen moved to Los Angeles when he was 17 (he says he came for the chicks), and had an epiphany shortly after arriving when he saw the Watts Towers. At that point Rosen's course in life was set, and he spent the next 50 years documenting and preserving folk art in all its myriad forms. What the term "folk art" means to Rosen is any grass-roots form of creative expression that exists beyond the confines of the fine arts world. He's compiled an archive of more than 30,000 images documenting unique environments created by outsider artists, decorated motor vehicles, murals, small businesses with hand-made signs, graffiti, pageants, store-front churches, festivals, parades, state fairs, Pop art happenings, organized actions of social protest, religious rituals, Love-Ins and Be-Ins. Rosen hass also played a crucial role in the preservation of folk art sites such as Watts Towers, Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village in Simi Valley, California, and Nit Wit Ridge in Cambria, California. A resident of Los Angeles, Rosen has suffered a series of health problems in recent years that have forced to curtail his picture-making activities.











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by Chris Ziegler
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Ladies and Gentlemen, the Fabulous Sharp Ease



A slightly injured and slightly drunk Sunday afternoon with the Sharp Ease: singer Paloma Parfrey is tipsy with a beer and a bent trumpet and one sprained ankle, still limping after the part in last night's show when she fell into a hole in the stage. But Sharp Ease write off injuries instantly. Two shows ago, Paloma had scribbled some broken glass all over her arm, and she was completely recovered within hours. That's the resilience of the Los Angeles native—the same thing that keeps coyotes and deer poking around the edge of Echo Park also keeps the Sharp Ease alive and thriving. Early 45s like "T-Spin" and first album *Going Modern* (released last year on olFactory Records in cooperation with LA's landmark all-ages space the Smell) outlined the Sharp Ease sound: Pixies and Slits with sax (by Anika Stephen) and keys (by Paloma's brother Isaac) and cut-above lyrics by Paloma, who grew up in a commune and graduated into teenage rock 'n' roll band the Grown-Ups before she even graduated high school. Newest EP *Remain Instant* finds Sharp Ease recovering after a line-up shake-up (longtime producer/supporter Rod Cervera played guitar on this one, following original guitarist Sara Musser) for seven of their best new songs about life in still-unheard Los Angeles—the never-seen-on-TV co-ops and galleries and collectives that keep an out-of-breath outsider community breathing, where the Sharp Ease play their shows and sprain their ankles. Paloma and bassist Dana Barenfeld, drummer Christene Kings and new guitarist Aaron Friscia meet for beer and photographs at Paloma's 1957 Airstream trailer.

ARTHUR: Paloma, exactly what kind of commune did you grow up in?

PALOMA: My parents were both extremely politically active and they decided to join this commune after I was six months old to be able to protest regularly and feed the homeless. It was this thing in East LA—the Catholic Worker. It's Christian-oriented, but not like hyper-Christian. Their work is to serve the hungry and protest nuclear weapons. So I've been protesting since I was six months old.

The Sharp Ease: Dana Barenfeld, Christene Kings, Paloma Parfrey and Aaron Friscia.

above: Slightly injured, slightly drunk.



Sharp Ease just before the ankle sprain.

CHRISTENE: Paloma came out of the womb with a NO NUKES sign.

How did that affect who you are now?

P: It makes me feel selfish for living as poor as I am. I'm barely getting by, trying to follow my heart and my art, and sometimes when I see what people are doing on a political level—dedicating maybe as much as I do to art, even though every other show we do is a benefit, and even though we definitely have a lot of songs about social politics—it makes me feel guilty because I'm not living every day serving that purpose specifically. A lot of people call themselves radical but I'm not—I don't bother saying it. I know what people do who are really in it, and I'm not it. I do as much as I can as an artist, but I'm definitely not protesting every day. I organize a little and I talk to people. I participate. I don't run it.

C: But you totally support it.

P: But it makes me feel guilty—I'm a supporter and I participate and if I had money, I'd give it to them, but I'm not an organizer right now.

You don't think the Sharp Ease fit into that?

P: We make people think—I don't know if we make people do things. We are the first step. I just think it's really hypocritical when all thse crazy punk bands say they're hyper-political and they don't do shit. So many bands say they do something and they don't—it's what all their songs are about and they don't do it. We're not gonna say, 'We are the movement, man!' We're not the fucking movement! It needs everyone—every skill, every talent…

Musicians?

P: That's the first step—acknowledgement. I'm just saying what it means.

In 'Twist The Risk,' you talk about 'positive aggression.' That seems to sum up some of the Sharp Ease.

P: It came from dealing with relationships that were really fragile. And the whole song is calling out to people. I felt passive in my own life about certain things—wanting and wishing that there was some way that people could own being aggressive without being negative.

C: Or violent.

P: A lot of people put 'negative' and 'violent' together with aggression, but it doesn't have to go hand in hand.

C: It's being assertive.

P: And passionate! It does sum up the band in some way. A lot of people have told me, 'Oh, you have so much sensitivity and softness—why can't you ever sing really sweet?' Someone actually approached me: 'Why are you so angry? You have such a beautiful voice.' And all I could think was 'Is my anger really that ugly?' And when I play music with these amazing human beings—

PALOMA PARFREY (above, right):

"Someone actually said to me, 'Why are you so angry? You have such a beautiful voice.' And all I could think was 'Is my anger really that ugly?'"

C: 'Amazing'—can you emphasize that?

P: —it empowers me so much. Why would you ever not be aggressive in that honesty? When we write songs together—even though we've tried to write pretty songs—we find beauty in our aggression. It's totally not negative at all. We're about hope. We've always been about hope.

You're pragmatically political.

P: I felt more politics in Lou Reed than the Dead Kennedys—the Dead Kennedys are like, 'Oh, that was the '80s.' I like universalism.

C: I feel each one of us is political in our own way. It's a given—of course anybody in this band has some sense of progressive politics. Not even a question.

P: We all have our struggle and we bring it!

DANA: I'm tired of hearing stupid songs about heartbreak.

C: And overwhelmingly male voices on the airwaves that have nothing to say for me and nothing to do with me.

D: We know what we like and we put out what we like.

C: We play what we want to hear on the radio. We create what we wanna hear because it's lacking. The show we played last night was the quintessential Sharp Ease show. At an art gallery with two other very cool bands—one all queer—and it was a full house and they treated us very well. And we played a great set, which had a large part to do with the audience, so we made sure the audience had a good time, too. And then the messages are conveyed and they get it.

P: I love LA, and sometimes I'm tired and it's a struggle, but I like the struggle, and where I live now, it's not a struggle. People in LA are strong and I would never ever wanna be around people who are weak—when you're in a strong army, you're strong!

C: In this city, it's mind over matter.

P: You can make this city whatever you want it!

What do you mean that people in LA are strong?

P: It's really simple. Everything is super-difficult. You have to move further and be able to understand more cultures. And it's hard to meet people in LA because people are a little bit difficult to get to know.

C: Everyone has walls up.

D: And they're covered by smog.

P: But being strong means you let people know. You prove yourself. You're fucking here—make it happen! It's the people that last. People come here for a year and give up because they don't get it. They don't understand that you have to fucking battle! It's a crazy-ass war out there. Mentally it's a war, and if you aren't down, you shouldn't be here. But if you go anywhere else, you're bored. Because everything is hand-fed to you: hand-fed politics, hand-fed clothes, hand-fed styles, hand-fed music. You gotta search for it in LA. You gotta KNOW! I still feel that way. I'm still constantly searching. I'll never get bored here.

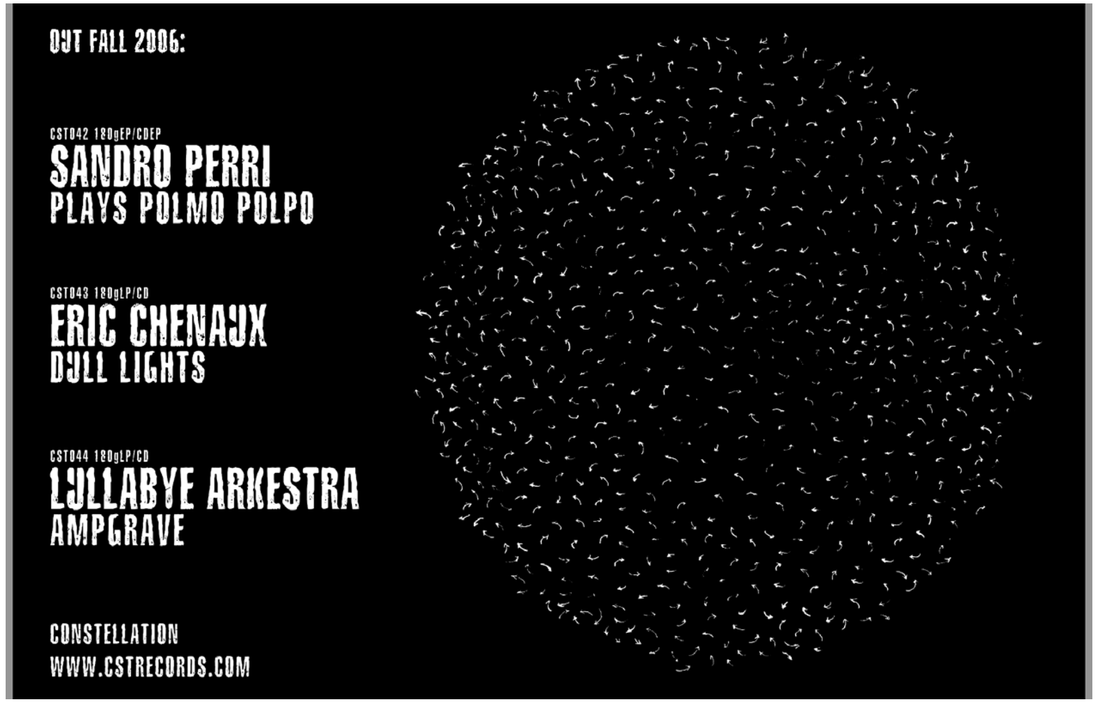
D: It's interesting how we all met—we all live in different places in LA. I'm in Sherman Oaks, Christene is in Hollywood, Paloma is in Echo Park and Aaron is in Glendale, but places draw us together. There are certain little pockets that bring people together and that's how things happen. There IS a lot of shit—the traffic sucks, but once you get where you're going, you're fine!

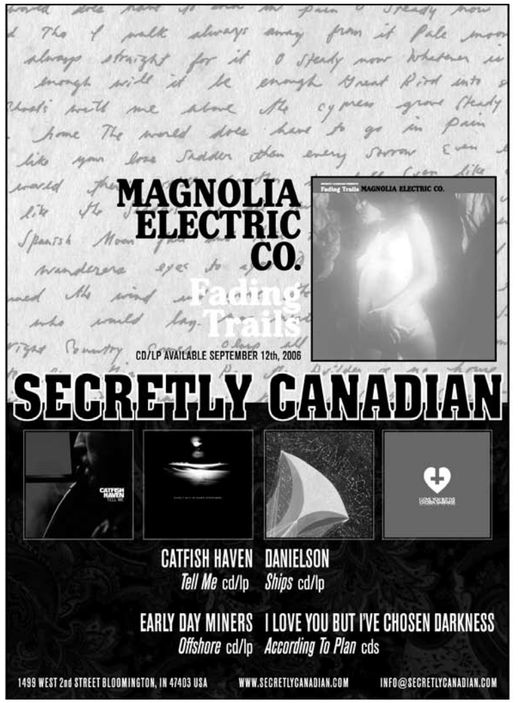
P: The misconception of LA as a dreamy Disneyland place is bullshit. In Echo Park, you see real families and real people struggling—artists on the brink of something—even lame-ass bookers doing better because the community demands it! Though I've seen five Hummers in Echo Park this year—I counted them. But I just went to an amazing punk show in Venice—kids in Venice still fuck shit up because of rent control. And the art scene in Culver City is rocking. Basically the only reason to go to Hollywood is Amoeba. One of the reasons I think the LA music scene is really cool—I see the same people at a folk show as I see at hip-hop shows or punk shows. It's not like people feel they have to be tied to a scene. There's just a love for good music—not tied down to a sound.

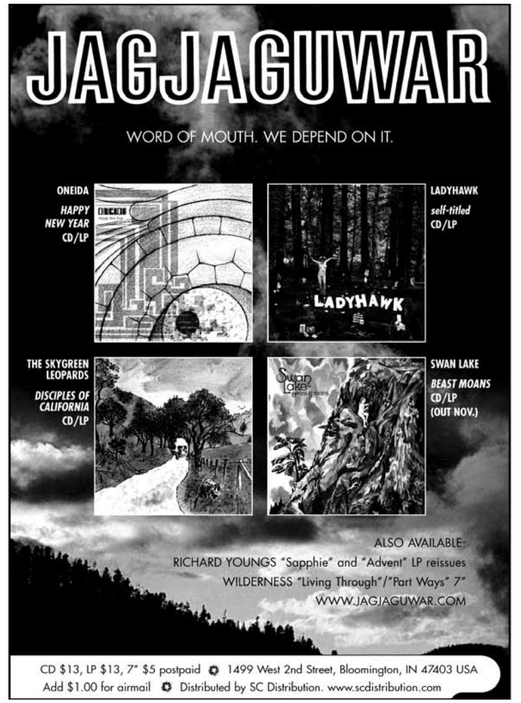
Do you connect to more LA bands now than you did in the past?

C: For sure now.

P: Music wasn't as forward as it is now in LA. People were so stuck on whatever Coachella was playing. Not many people could play like Sonic Youth and we're not really about that anyway. Me and Dana and Christene especially all come (61 ►









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- The Onion

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Odi Profanum Vulgus Et Arceo

Never before has someone had so much fun being so pissed off. We affectionately refer to this as grind-hop: half Volkswagen Thing, half Cadillac Escalade.

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Oh No! Oh My!

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OH NO! OH MY!

ENVY

Insomniac Doze

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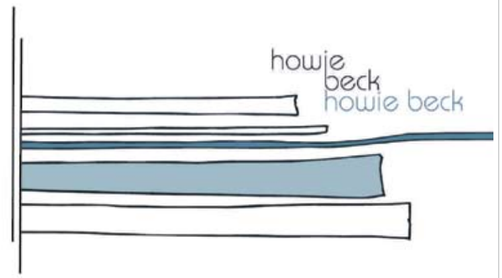
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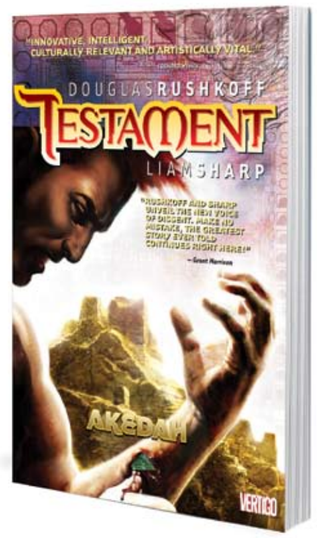
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Boris - continuing with their extremely prolific output, Southern Lord is proud to unleash the US version of: PINK. Followers of the band already know that each release Boris will do something unexpected, entirely unique, and continually forging in a new direction. PINK is absolutely no exception! However, for possibly the first time these new recordings effectively combine all the strongest elements of what Boris is capable of into one solid, complete, concise album. Pink has it all: Ultra-heavy drone, dark psychelia, 70's fuzzed out acid rock, balls out punk rawk, all fused with a dose of ultra-catchy melodicism.



Lair of the Minotaur - An epic and undeniable monolith hath been unleashed upon thee earth... Behold! The second album from Chicagos' Lair of the Minotaur. The Ultimate Destroyer bulldozes down the same path as their critically acclaimed and now classic debut: Carnage. Blistering riffs, and skull-crushing rhythms played with a apocalyptic aesthetic and complimented perfectly with horrific lyrical vengeance. Ultimate Destroyer in whole is faster, yet slower and more vicious than anything the band has previously done.



Mord - Spewing forth gruesomely-grim, buzzing and blazing black metal, Southern Lord is proud to unleash the the debut incarnate from Norways' MORD. This is pure yet filthy Norwegian Black Metal in the veins of ye olde quarde: Immortal, Dark Throne, Carpathian Forest, etc. Mord effectively put a different spin on "traditional black metal" by injecting the influence of satanic death metal bands like: Incantation, and Sadistik Exekution.



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Tangorodrim - Israels grimmest horde unleashed this sickened album upon the unsuspecting a while back. Previously only available on vinyl, we now are proud to offer it on limited edition (1,000 pressed), machine numbered compact discs. We also have a limited amount of the grey vinyl version of the LP. A must for fiends into Darkthrone, Bathory and primitive black metal.

SOUTHERN LORD

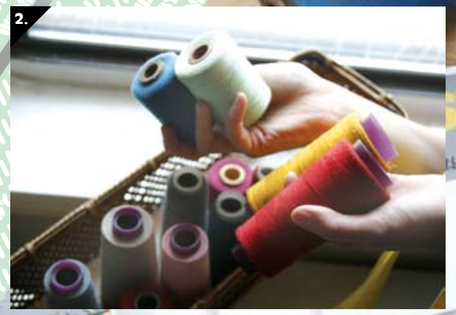
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TOP
1. Buttons, sewing machine and thread

ABOVE
2. Nicole selects her thread...

RIGHT
3. tailors her shirt...

OPPOSITE
4. sews the coat...

Photography: Glynnis McDaris
Model: Nicole Lombardi
Clothes: Built By Wendy
Special thanks to Sameena at Built by Wendy

SEW U BUILT BY YOU

Wendy Mullin of Built By Wendy fame recently collaborated with the pattern company Simplicity on a new set of patterns. Not to be confused with the patterns your mom used to buy, these are original, awesome Built by Wendy patterns that are fully customizable.

Our friend Nicole tried her hand at sewing a whimsical, sheer yellow top and a red, houndstooth cape—perfect for fall. For more Built by Wendy patterns, check out *Sew U* (Bulfinch Press, $25.99), Wendy Mullin's new how-to book written with Eviana Hartman and Beci Orpin.





5.



6.



7.





8.

5. fits both pieces to the mannequin...

ABOVE RIGHT

6. tries on the yellow shirt...

RIGHT

7. models it...

OPPOSITE

8. and—ta-da—models both pieces.

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lambchop



Damaged

Eschewing the country and R&B influences of earlier Lambchop works, "Damaged" offers songs infused with a hushed austerity that is uniquely Southern yet oddly universal.

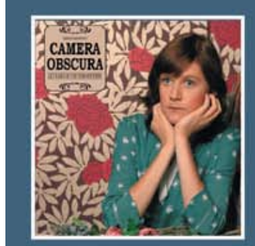
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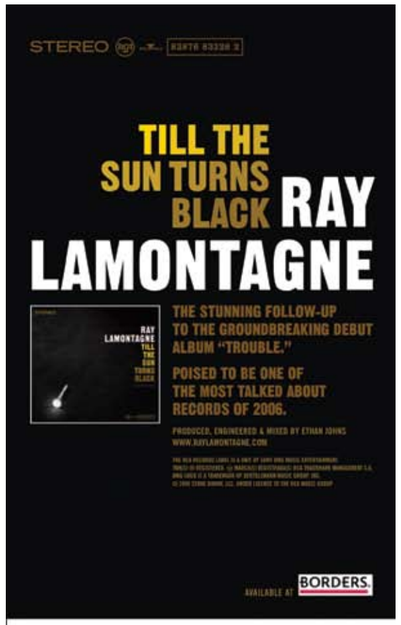
camera obscura

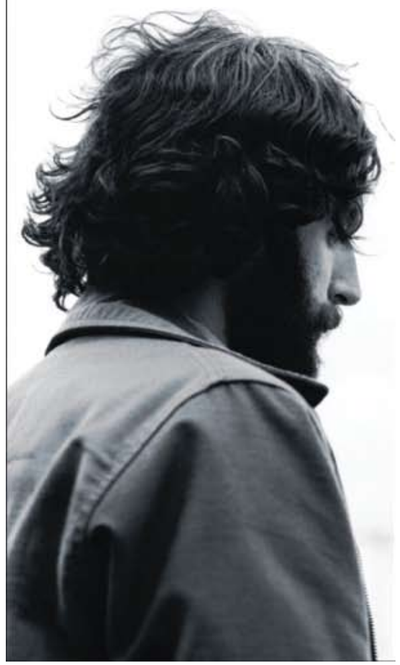


Let's Get Out of This Country

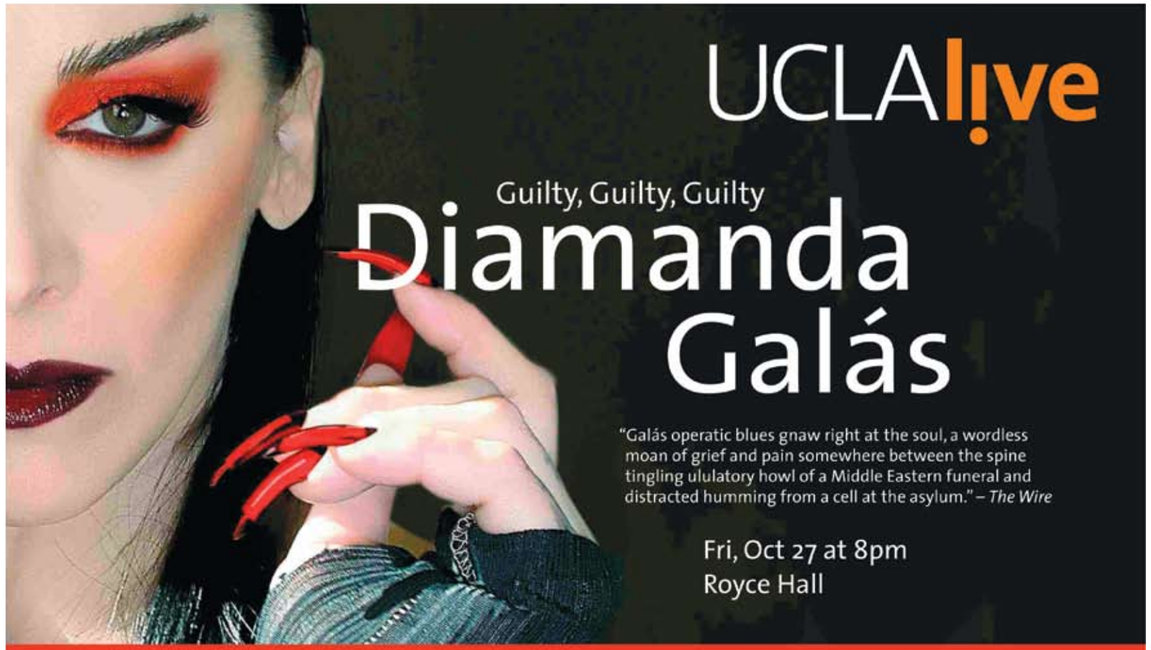
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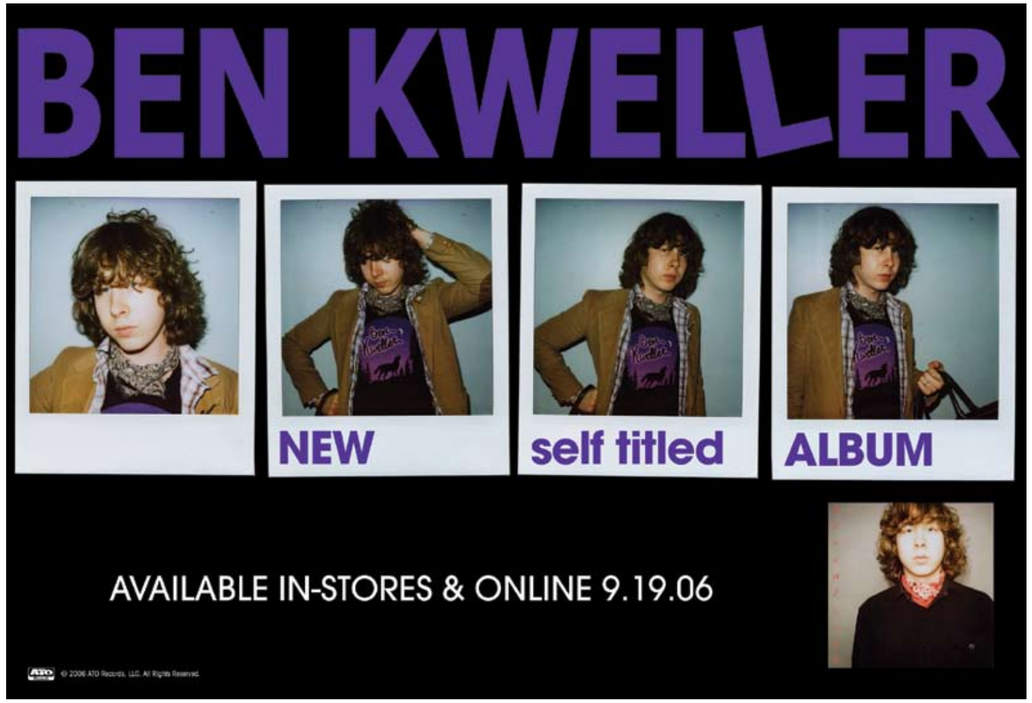
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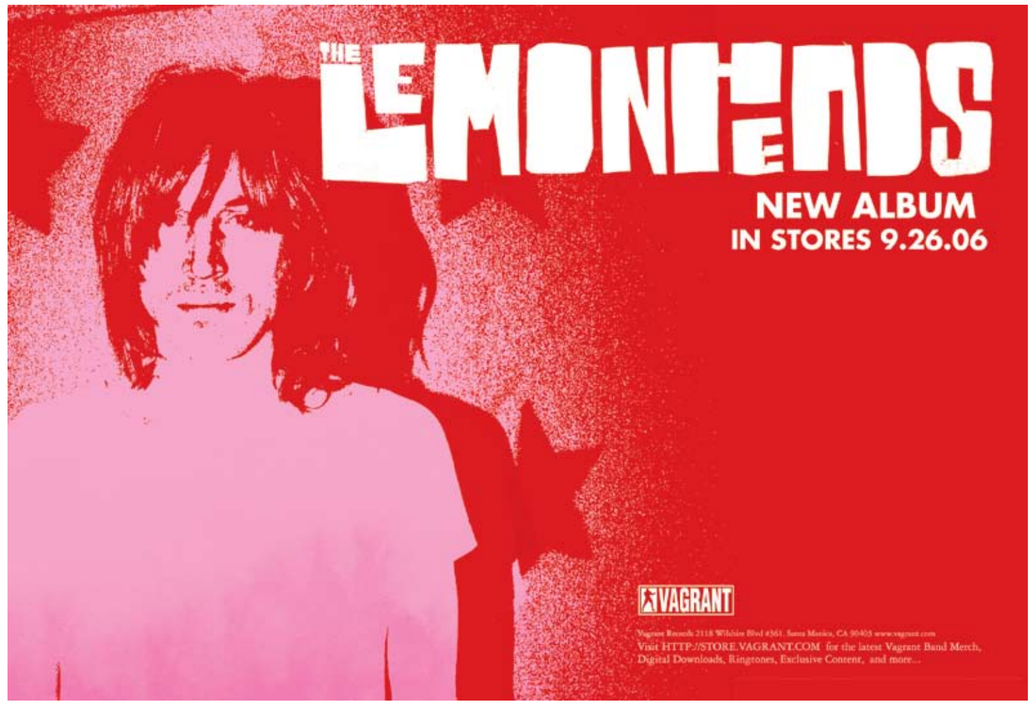







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LET THE KIDS IN TOO!

A History of All-Ages

(Part One)

by
Jay Babcock
illustrations by
Geoff McFetridge

After this spring's ArthurBall, someone posted to our website saying, "Hey, how was Growing? I really wanted to see them, but I'm only 17." Now, if anyone needs to see Growing—a drone duo who are making a very challenging, contemplative sound right now, not unlike the first Fripp & Eno album—it's a 17-year-old: talk about raw material for a formative experience. And yet, he—or she—was denied, because ArthurBall was an 18 & over event. Which meant that I was partly to blame.

That wasn't a happy thing to realize. I'd been 17 once. I still haven't recovered from my own formative experience back in 1988 when I saw the Mirage/Huevos-era Meat Puppets at Variety Arts Center in L.A. I was a teenaged square amidst 1500 freaks of the universe at a cheap, all-ages gig headlined by true goners: enduring the Kirkwood brothers' 20-minute encore cover of the Beatles' "She's So Heavy" left a much deeper, richer impression on my tender, gradually opening mind than seeing U2 and the Pretenders at the Coliseum a couple months before. That was a painfully loud, stage-managed spectacle, a queasy mix of overwhelming power, machine precision and mass audience; the pajama-clad Meat Puppets, on the other hand, were... well, they were fun. They operated on a scale that was recognizably human. They seemed genuinely off-the-cuff, in-the-moment, willing to misfire. Their single stage prop, a pair of Playboy bunny ears spontaneously draped on a microphone, resonated with me in some deep, pleasantly weirdifying way. That Meat Puppets show pointed to a way out: a different way of leading one's life—of embracing your idiosyncrasies and weird visions and interests rather than supressing them. It was like some beautiful rite of passage, an initiation into art and imagination and other people—a sideways welcoming into a more creative, fertile, vibrant, rich way of being. Years later, I'd find out that, of course, I wasn't the only one who'd



John Sinclair

undergone such an experience: almost everyone I know who is involved with music as a performer or enthusiast or whatever can point to some bizarro show that changed their life when they were a teenager, that lit up new paths.

I wonder if that kind of experience is readily available anymore to those who want it. I mean, the Mars Volta are amazing, but you have to pay $65 to see them open for the Red Hot Chili Peppers at a basketball arena. Growing are cool, but Arthur Ball is 18 & up. And so on. The sad truth is that although exciting music is regularly performed all over L.A.—at backyard barbecues and loft district rent parties, dive bars and supper clubs, nightclubs and art galleries, high school football games and homecoming dances, city parks and Sunday morning church services, street corners and subways, outdoor amphitheaters and baseball stadiums—maybe the only time when a good number of people of all ages can gather together to witness quality music, at an affordable price, with a good sound system, is when an artist plays an in-store set at Amoeba Music on Sunset Boulevard. Kudos to Amoeba for providing this basic public service to arts-starved Angeleno teenagers, of course—it's more than the public schools and mainstream broadcast media do—but surely it's not a positive indicator of a culture's health when the best venue for all-ages music is a record store. 'Dancing in the aisles' should mean something more than grooving politely in the Used Funk/Soul section as cash registers ring in the distance.

We lose something as a society when we don't allow our youth to experience music—by which I mean real, living, breathing music, as opposed to commerce-driven pop—in a decent, accessible, affordable, relatively intimate setting where music is given the opportunity to be truly experienced as music. Something has gone wrong here. But what has happened, exactly, to get us to this point? And is it just Los Angeles, or is it nationwide? What can we do about it? What did they do in the past?

I decided it was time to call John Sinclair. (54 ➤



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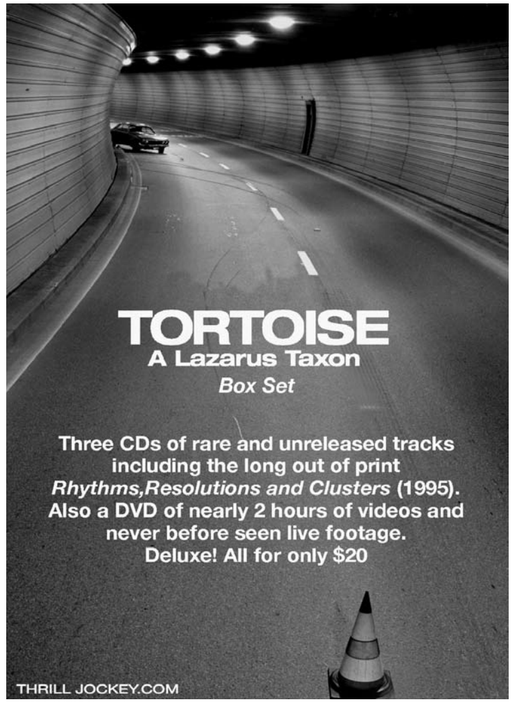
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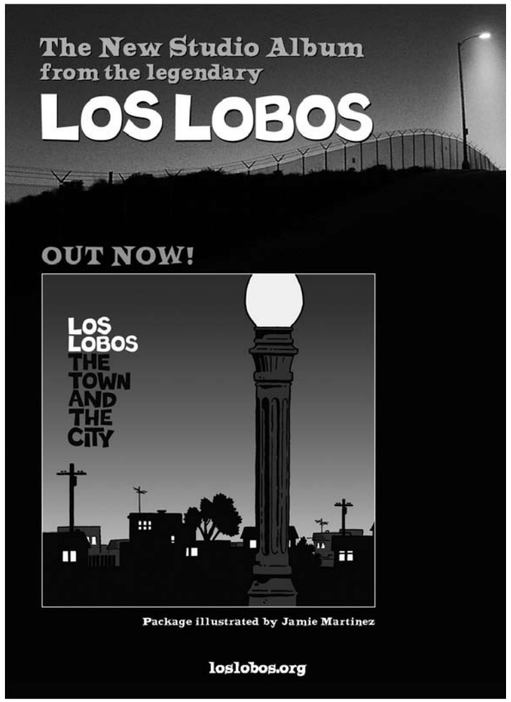
Múm - Peel Sessions

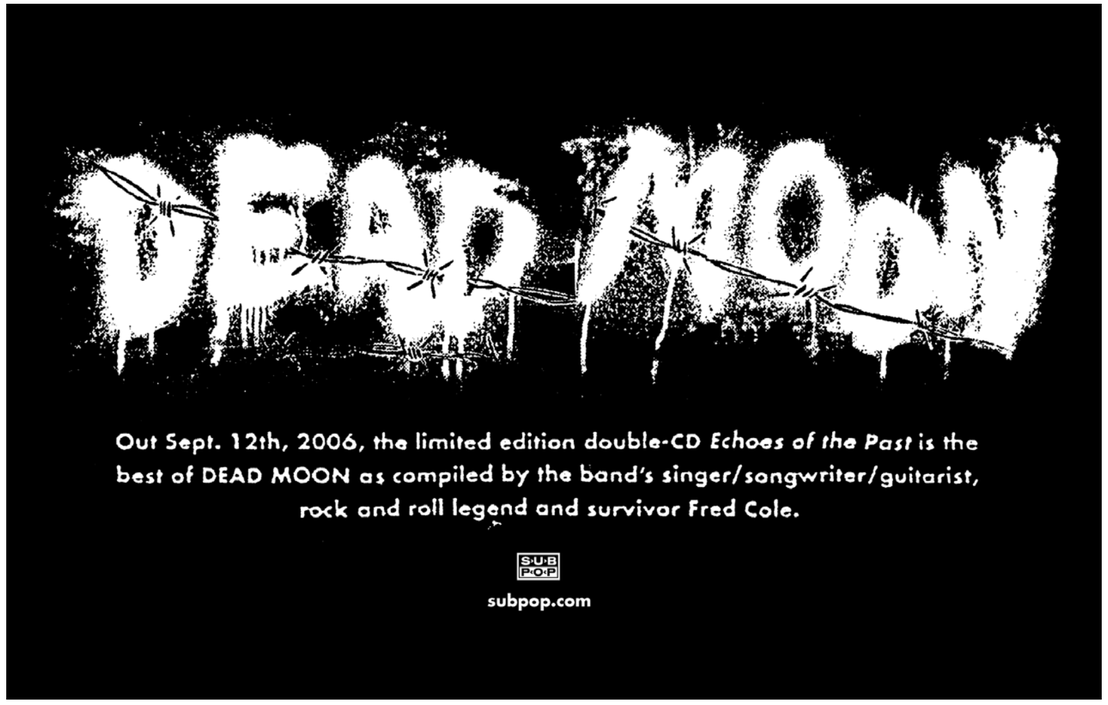
...the sessions include 4 endearingly reworked tracks, spawned from the band's debut album Yesterday Was Dramatic, Today Is Okay. A new studio album is in the works for next year.
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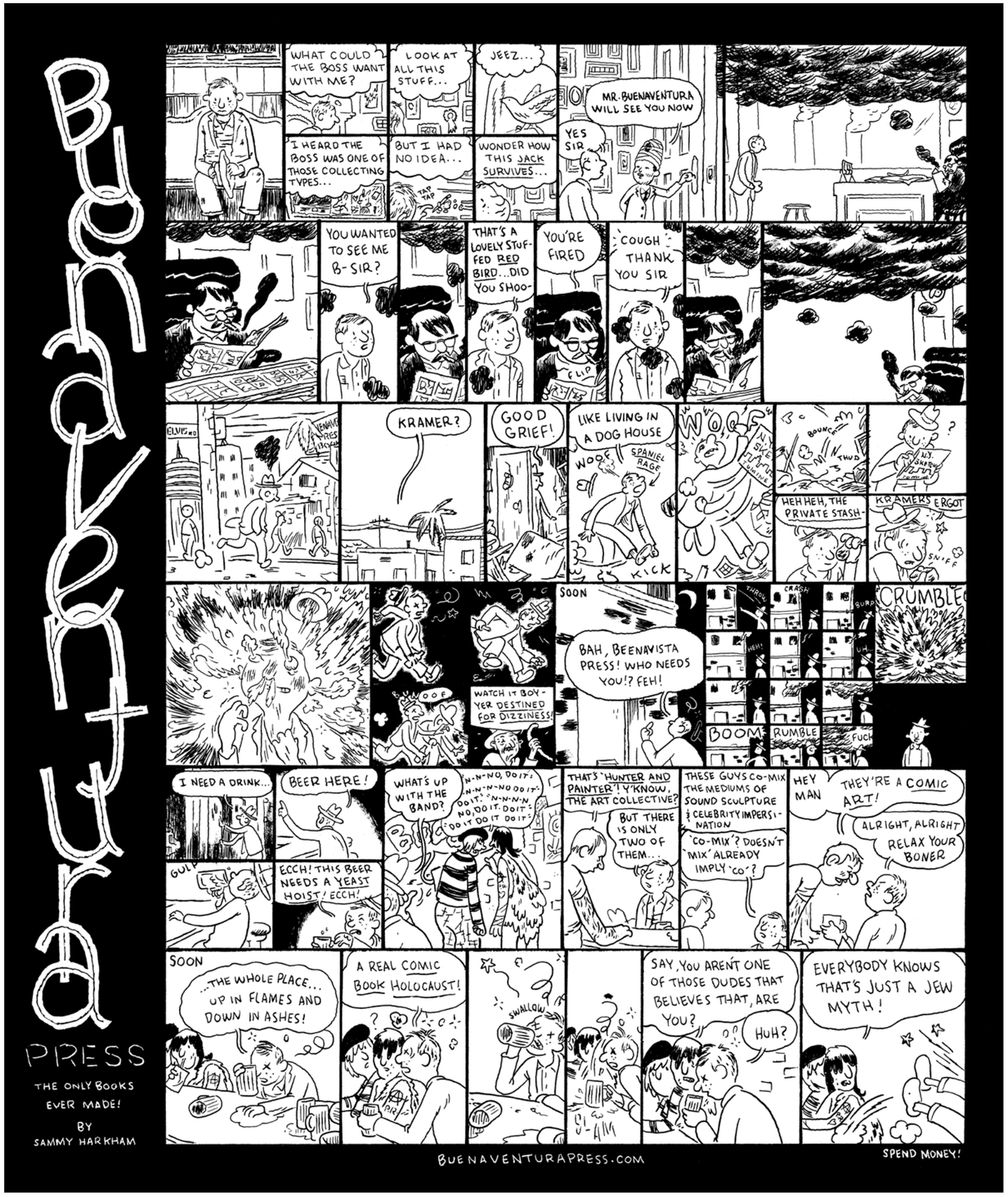
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FUCK
I NEED A DRINK...
BEER HERE!
GULP
ECCH! THIS BEER NEEDS A YEAST HOIST! ECCH!
WHAT'S UP WITH THE BAND?
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SWALLOW
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HUH?
EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT'S JUST A JEW MYTH!
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SPEND MONEY!

(*Let The Kids in Too* continued from page 49)

A Visit With John Sinclair

During the 1960s, John Sinclair founded the Detroit Artists Workshop, managed the MC5, headed the anarchist White Panther Party and got thrown in jail for 10 years for giving two joints to an undercover cop. He was freed after serving two years due to the intervention of John Lennon, who wrote a song for him and appeared at a 15,000-plus arena rally to bring attention to Sinclair's case (check out the new "The US vs John Lennon" documentary for more details). He is a renowned poet, scholar, deejay and journalist, and at 64, still a towering presence. We talked about all-ages shows outside a brandname coffeeshop in Culver City over half-finished crossword puzzles.



JOHN SINCLAIR: Here's a point I want to make about this right off: This whole 'age' thing is a function of the whole white American culture—it isn't a universal thing. When I was coming up, you had no congress with anyone more than two years older or two years younger than you, unless they were your brother and sister. You had no congress with adults, with kids, anybody but your own age peers. Everything you did was around that, we were alienated from all the others.

I grew up listening to blues and R&B on the radio in the Fifties. I'm not into country music. I avoided it like the plague. I came from a farming community, and I didn't want no part of that! Once I heard black music on the radio, I wanted to be where those people were. They were having a lot more fun than anybody I knew, and then when I started going to their dances. It was a beautiful thing.

They had big shows in Flint, Michigan. Rhythm and blues shows. I saw everyone that came to Flint between 1955 and 1960. I went to these rhythm and blues shows and there'd be 3,000 black people and 20 white kids who were music freaks and liked to dance.

The thing that hit me the hardest was that there were people of all ages there: little kids, grandmas, and most of the crowd was young adults who were older than us. The teenagers like us were only a stratum. There were people in their 60s, people in their 40s, the finest women you'd ever seen in their 20s just dressed to the nines, red dresses and shit. Knock your eyes out. And there'd be little kids running around and it was no big deal. And the people who wanted to have a drink, they had a flask in their pockets. If they wanted to smoke a joint, they had a joint. It was just like going to a different planet. It was so much hipper. And they were also so accepting. It wasn't like you would be nervous about being there. They'd let you have your fun, you'd dance with the black girls, and it was just like being in heaven for me, man. Because where I lived, I hated everything.

ARTHUR: Who did you get to see at these sorts of shows?

I vividly remember seeing guys like Larry Williams, Little Richard, Chuck Berry and Fats Domino, of course. I remember Alan Freed's "Big Beat Show of 1958. They opened with Screaming Jay Hawkins climbing out of a coffin. That was the opening act, and there were seven more acts to come, ending with Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis. These were revues, they had one band, Paul Williams or Choker Campbell or someone like that would lead it, and they would be the backing band for all the featured performers. If you had one hit, you played it, and you did your next record. If you had two hits, you did both and played your next single, you know. I saw James Brown once, and he did 'Please, Please, Please' and one other, and that was it. But the shows were great because, you know, what's awful is these bands that are coming up only have a couple of good tunes, and they have to play an hour? You just get bored. But, man, when you see someone do those two tunes, you'd think they were the greatest fucking act in the world. So those were all-ages shows, and cost only three bucks!

Where were these held?

3,000-seat auditoriums. I don't remember a lot of the details, I can't even tell you how often these would come through. When they started these things in '56, when rock and roll 'hit,' the shows were all black. In '57, they started adding people like Ricky Nelson and Buddy Holly. By '58 you started to have shows that were half black and half white in terms of the attractions. The music had crossed over enough where there were 3,000 white kids in the Flint area who would pay three dollars to see a show. And it was headlined by Jerry Lee Lewis who was a white act, of course. By '59 and '60 they killed all the black stuff off; it was all Paul Anka and Bobby Vee. Chuck Berry was in a penitentiary. Jerry Lee Lewis was under approbation for marrying his 13-year-old cousin. Little Richard was a preacher. Of course Fats Domino steamed on through, making great records.

What about jazz musicians? Did you get to see live jazz in the Fifties?

I didn't know anything about it. I heard some of it on the radio, after the R&B show went off the air, jazz would come on as I was going to sleep. But I didn't know who the artists were or what it was about or anything. It was a different world. I went to college later and a friend turned me on to jazz.

When did you start seeing jazz guys?

1960. I would see them at the Minor Key coffeehouse in Detroit. I lived in Flint which was 60 miles to Detroit, and I'd drive down there, a ticket was $3.50 which was huge money then. But you could stay until 5 a.m. and you could buy one coffee or one Coke and just fake it the rest of the night. I saw Coltrane there, and Miles Davis, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Horace Silver, playing three sets! Me being from Flint, I would study all the characters there. What they were wearing, how they held their cigarettes, all that kind of shit. No drunks, no pressure, the hipsters just hanging out. I saw Cannonball Adderley at this bar, this upscale jazz bar, and it was so lame, the setting. We left during the first set after driving all the way from Flint and paying $3.50. It was too stiff, but the coffeehouse was just so cool. Today I'd much rather play in a coffeehouse than a bar, 'cause I drink coffee still.

When you started working with the MC5, those guys were younger.

They were teenagers, yes. They were just out of high school. We had a house, and the living room was the performance space. We did them every Sunday afternoon, and they were open to everyone, and there was no charge. It was so much fun, man.

There was no drinking. Rock and roll in Detroit in the '60s was strictly in teen clubs, high school gymnasiums, the rare college ... and even then, not a real concert, just some fraternity party. And the Grande Ballroom, that was the class venue.

What about bars?

If you played rock and roll in bars, you had to play all Top 40 cover tunes. There were bands that did that, but we didn't want anything to do with that. When the Grande opened, the owner had been to San Francisco and saw bands who were playing all their own music, and he realized that this was what it was going to be like, and he was right. So the MC5 were the only ones, along with Bob Seger. The fact that they could get a gig and headline, and get their names on a poster, set an example for a lot of other bands. It gave them something to aspire to. It was a beautiful thing in that respect.



Rock and roll in Detroit in the '60s was strictly in teen clubs, high school gymnasiums, the rare frat party. And the Grande Ballroom, that was the class venue.

photo by Leni Sinclair

When I first heard the MC5, I thought 'Man, these guys are the greatest,' but their shit was totally un-together. But once they got all their chords unraveled and started playing, it was just magnificent to me. They were improvising, and their lead singer was named after McCoy Tyner! I thought 'This is my cup of tea!' The first gig I went to with them, I probably had to give them a ride, was at a teen center in Plymouth, Michigan, in the western suburbs, and they played a battle-of-the-bands against called the Unrelated Segments that had a hit record on a 45, and [the other band] won. I just thought, 'These guys aren't going to go too far with this kind of a crowd.' But at the Grande, you'd start with a hundred people there, and they were like 'Hungry Freaks, Daddy.' They would be the hundred people that smoked pot or took some acid once, hung around Wayne State or lived around the campus. We were the core audience for the Grande, because we knew about the Avalon and the Fillmore. We were just doing backflips that there was going something like that here in fucking Detroit. So, that's who they played for in the first months.

The other thing in those days, it wasn't in the popular consciousness at all. It wasn't like today where they cover rock bands in the papers. I bet if you went through the Detroit Free Press and News, the only things you'll find are bits about this 'freak gathering place' and these weirdo hippies at the Grande Ballroom, and this schoolteacher who runs it. Weirdo stories, you know? Never anything about 'Jeff Beck slayed Friday night.' Never. I don't think you can ever find one story about it, which is pretty refreshing. All this shit now is written about, but it's not any good. But everybody knows about it.

What killed that situation?

It got big. It got bigger and bigger. It opened up in October of 1966, and in the spring of '67 'White Rabbit' by the Jefferson Airplane was a top 10 hit, and by July, 'Light My Fire' by the Doors was the number one hit, and that opened the doors for popular acceptance. There was money in it all of a sudden. Woodstock was the watershed. Before Woodstock, people thought that this hippie rock and roll was just a fad. Then all of a sudden, there's a half-million people sitting out in the rain listening to all these artists that America had never heard of. Columbia sat up and started signing people after Monterey, but after Woodstock...! The majors took over the underground after Woodstock.

See, when we played the Grande Ballroom, we were the top band there for years before they started bringing in touring bands. We made $125 a night, it wasn't a lot. The Grande usually held 1,000, but he'd put in 2,000 for the Who or Cream, and it would be packed wall-to-wall. There wouldn't be an inch of space. On Sundays you had all-ages shows, otherwise you had to be 17 or something. That's how we ended up with Blood Sweat & Tears with the Psychedelic Stooges on Sunday. One time the MC5 played a Sunday afternoon show with Blue Cheer ... the 'loudest show in the history of rock and roll'! [*Laughs.*]

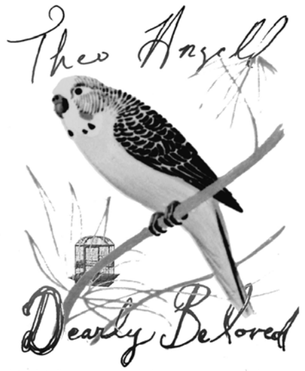
What happened to the spaces where a band as young as the MC5 at their beginning could play to their own people?

(56)



A HISTORY OF ALL-AGES SHOWS

If the kids wanna have some fun, they gotta ignore the music industry. Because in our day, when I was coming up, the "music industry" was on a whole 'nother planet.

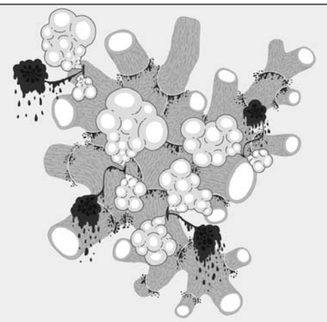


Sassy is a real Freak Folker—we've taught her to say "New Weird America" over and over to the point where she actually believes it is, in fact, new and, exclusively American.

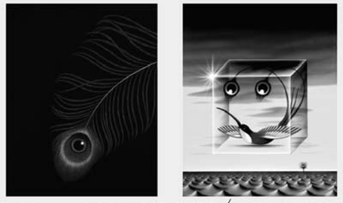
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In '72 they passed the 18-year-old voting law, and the drinking age was dropped to 18, and so then everybody played in bars because if you could draw 100 people to a bar, you'd get 500 bucks. If you wanted to go beyond a bar of 200 [capacity], you had to have a record deal, and you had to open for the Allman Brothers or somebody. It was like that from that point on until when I was done working in the Eighties. Same thing. That's as much as you could do, and of course there weren't any kids there because they weren't allowed in. The kids went to arena shows to see Alice Cooper or KISS. I'd say since the mid-Seventies, they've all grown up in that space, which is of course totally unsuited for music.

So, a lot of the punk stuff in the late '70s and early '80s was about rebuilding those original spaces from the ground up.

You had to do it yourself, whether you were punk or not, if there was any future for you in the music business. You get a van and somebody would let you come to their city and play in their place for nothing. You'd sleep on the floor of some ugly girl somewhere, and then you'd get out of her life.

See, the thing about what they gotta do now, if the kids wanna have some fun, is they just gotta ignore the music industry. Because in our day, when I was coming up, the 'music industry' was on a whole 'nother planet. When I met the MC5 and started hanging out with them, they were five years younger than me, and they were all wanting a hit record and everything, and we had that big flirtation period where the major labels signed weirdos for a while, and Elektra signed the MC5. And then, as Fred Goodman so beautifully detailed it in his book *Mansion on the Hill*, the majors ruined it all.

NEXT ISSUE: *From punk rock to the present, featuring interviews with Chuck Dukowski (Black Flag, SST), Ian Mackaye (Minor Threat, Fugazi, Dischord Records) and Calvin Johnson (Beat Happening, K Records), musician Will Oldham, Shannon Roach (The Vera Project in Seattle), Greg Saunier (Deerhoof), Shannon Stewart (Vera Project, All Ages Movement project) and Jim Ward (At the Drive-In, Sparta).*

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DVDs

The Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda
A DVD by IRA COHEN

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- Two new, never-before-released alternative soundtracks to "Invasion" by Sunburned Hand of the Man and Acid Mothers Temple SWR
- Director's Commentary track by Ira Cohen
- "Brain Damage," a new film directed by Ira Cohen and produced by BASTET created from never-before-seen original 16mm outtakes
- 16-page commemorative booklet featuring mylar photography and poetry by Ira Cohen and Angus MacLise, and critical texts by Ian Macfadyen and Allan Graubard
- An original slideshow of 60 mylar photographs with soundtrack by Angus MacLise and original poetry by Ira Cohen

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(*Sharp Ease* continued from page 36)

from the older LA scene. I started really young and Christene and Dana were totally into it. I think we weren't into pigeonholing music, and you'd see a lot more like that when Jabberjaw was really flourishing. When the first Yeah Yeah Yeahs came out, I listened to it on tour, and then I got really bummed when we were in Texas because a writer came up to me—and I had been doing this since I was 12!—and she was like, 'You're really doing Karen O well.' I'm not like her at all, but they see a strong woman and automatically think it's the same person—same kind of music, yes, similar rock 'n' roll, but our voices are totally different and our stage presence is totally different.

C: You know why they compare you to her? There are very very few female rock 'n' rollers out in the mainstream.

One per year.

C: Paloma and Karen and Kathleen Hanna...

P: That's why I know if we had a hit song, it'd be 'LA Mist.' The slow love song. Because they only let female singers have a love song as their first hit. They can't hear the female voice angry.

C: What about Heart? Pat Benatar?

P: That wasn't recently! Radio then was actually more cutting edge. The conglomerate Republican assholes hadn't got a hold of that shit.

How do you feel about the new EP?

C: Definitely a lot more sophisticated than first release.

P: We've been playing together for four years—the three of us—and been recording with Rod for five years. The music came out more mature—it's just math. He knew we weren't trying to be a punk band and weren't trying to be a pop band. We were just trying to make music that mattered to us.

C: It felt like Paloma kind of busted out lyrics I'd never heard before—like she was saving the really good stuff. In my opinion, Paloma is one of the best artists in LA right now.

D: Don't give her a head!

C: She's a jackass. But I still think she's one of the better artists in LA right now.

P: My heart got fucking BROKE when the Grown-Ups broke up, and I had three years of lyrics I'd given them that they never used because they never put out the album. It was just as bad as losing a lover—it was HORRIBLE! So with the Sharp Ease, it was a slow process to get to the lyrics I'd been sitting on for like six years because I knew they were really awesome. Remain Instant is basically trust and love, like a band's second album. I always think the second albums are the best ever because the bands trust each other. They don't trust each other on the first and by the third they might hate each other, but the second is always brilliant. It's like marriage—you get comfortable but the sex is so amazing. Our album is married five years with amazing sex.

AARON: It's kind of weird we're still considered an all-girl band

C: You're like a girl!

A: It functions the same as any other band I've ever been in. I think it kind of takes away from the actual artistic ability of the band to be considered an all-girl band.

P: Well, you're not playing drums so it's fine! Ari Up—I think one of her more famous quotes about why the Slits were all girls was that 'We didn't hear any girl rhythms—we didn't hear the rhythm of women.' And that's what we always thought.

A: It's weird being the new guitar player in a band that's sort of established, but the fact that I have friendships with everyone individually and a longtime friendship with Dana—I've really embraced this band as being something amazing that's gonna keep happening. The new songs are different but awesome. It took a year—it usually takes me about a year for me to be able to connect with people.

D: And he's also a perfectionist.

A: I don't know if I am.

P: Oh my god, you're such a perfectionist!

A: I just want to make them play different time signatures.

What happened to Paloma's ankle?

D: It's not the first ankle incident.

A: She hurts herself once a month. And she's a big pussy. I fall down all the time and I don't care.

Did you just say 'I fall down all the time and I don't care'?

A: Yeah! It sucks when you get old—when you're a kid and you fall down, who cares? Now it hurts for like three weeks.

D: Paloma scares me when she swings the mic—I'm afraid I'm gonna get it in the face.

A: I enjoy getting hit in the face. It makes me more apt to be physical on stage.

D: Remember the piñata? She scared people then. We were at a party and there was a piñata, and someone put a bat in Paloma's hand and she just went for it.

She gets results.

D: There were people around and she didn't fucking care. She was swinging like Jackie Robinson.

Bull Tongue

Byron Coley & Thurston Moore

Explore the Voids of All Known Undergrounds

First of all, a few people have been griping lately that they continue to send us stuff to review and they aren't getting any word aktion in return. To this, we say—sorry. We get a numbing amount of material to review, and the vast bulk of it is actually pretty interesting. We do the best we can, although there has been talk about supplementing the print column with something additional that'd run on the Arthurmag.com website. In the meantime, don't lose the faith. If you are doing good, idiosyncratic work, we'll do what we can to pass the word one way or another. Keep it coming.


T.I.T.S.

Upset The Rhythm has been one of the coolest collectives tooling around London since their inception in 2003. They put on shows by the most radical of radical post riot punk action core noise freakers who happen to blow through town as well as put a few records out. They've really scored hard with a split release LP by howling UK psyche-tribe femme jamsters **Leopard Leg** and San Francisco all-girl metal/howl 4tet **T.I.T.S.**. Both these bands are super wild with Leopard Leg being a 10+ outfit of London and Brighton women stirring up a drumming, whooping cry to the Goddess light of sound, vision and pre-rock soulfire. T.I.T.S. have weirdo metal moves informed by the legacy of S.F. underground experimental noise and good times rock chaos catharsis from whence they came. The total witch jazz guitar juice and pummel bass/drum bash here put us on high alert. This split LP *Throughout the Ages* is a gorgeous gatefold affair and one anyone'd be a sap to pass on.

Tony Rettman, long time major domo of *200 Pound Underground*, has been expanding his empire lately. He's doing all kindsa crap on his new WFOT imprint, and one of the neatest is a book of art by **Marcia Bassett and Matthew Bower**. Not sure if it has a title, but it's great stuff—avant garde van art at its finest. Good thing to look at the next time you spin that Hototogisu 3LP set. Fusetron and Volcanic Tongue handle it. **Michael Bowman**'s *Nova Feedback* is also easy on the eyes. The first five issues collect a hot bouquet of drawings and collages that range from extremely casual to speed-freak-detailed. Some of them have a very '50s animation feel to them (although the subject matter has a tendency to be bit perverse) and it would be mighty interesting to meet a woman who was covered with his designs as tats. There's also another great booklet from L.A.'s **Hello Trudi** folks. *Bro, Maybe the Good Times Are Over* is a beautiful menagerie of smuts both crude and cruder. **Garry Davis** has also come through with something different: a booklet of collages called *You're On Glue*. Done over the course of 17 years, it's a wonderful collection of image-chops, very few of which fall into any of the standard style-holes one might expect.


Leopard Leg

Help yourself to an exquisitely duppy split LP, shared by **Dinosaurs, Baseball & Hopscotch** (a sorta Indiana spazz-prov all star orchestra) and France's **Glen or Glenda** (Friends and Relatives). DBH lock onto a riff the way a horny poodle locks onto your pantleg, burrowing snoots deep into your, uh, snoot receptor. It's reminiscent of a more jazzbo-oriented Fuzzhead or something. Glen or Glenda are a trio who go from grunting metal-themed instrumen-

tals into a very bruising jazz/noise hybrid at the drop of a chapeau. I have no real idea what the fuck they're up to, but what's not to like? Check their website and see if you can get an accurate fathom reading.

Most interesting rock read this time might well be the interview with Portland, Maine's the Same Band in **Kapital Ink**. Although I'd never heard of the combo—and still haven't heard a note they played—the story they tell ranges from Marion Brown's tenure at Bowdoin College through the punk era, and it's highly reet. Also up there in any terms you'd care to name is **Dumb Angel #4**. Largely penned by surf/Beach Boys scholar, Dominic Priore, this issue is a wild dive into Southern California beach culture of the early/mid '60s. Includes a piece by Harvey Kubernick about Phil Spector, a great survey of the early work of artist John van Hamersveld, stuff on Les Baxter, and wads of words and pics regarding the Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, Dick Dale, *et al*. It's been a long time since the last one, but the wait was definitely worth it. As is issue #6 of George Parsons' always-delirious **Dream** magazine. Noted in some circles as the most heroic looking interviewee in that Jandek documentary, Parsons has assembled a great set of pieces regarding psych, folk and general undergroundery (My Cat is An Alien, Bridget St. John, Vibracatherdal Orchestra, Windy & Carl, etc.) and packed it all up with a dandy CD featuring all of the aforementioned and more.

Swinging Michigan aktion comes in the form of the *Tender Swarm* LP by **Genders** (Ypsilanti). It has a disntinctly post-punk Brit sound with shards of PiL, the Pop Group and even Furious Pig rooting around the garbage-strewn lanes of the upper midwest. How careerist! There is also a post-punque classique feel to some of the moves on *first, before and never again* (Mt. St. Mtn.), the debut LP by San Francsico's **the Mall**. But they intersprese their bass lobbery with geographically appropriate references—a little Residents on the vocals, some Tuxedo Moon on the keys, even a touch of Sleepers in the guitar. Mix that with murky original stutterage and you get pretty cool results. Nice looking album, too.

It was with tremulous hand that we snatched up Tim Mitchell's book, **Sonic Transmission: Television, Tom Verlaine, Richard Hell**. With the classic 1974 photo of Verlaine, Hell, Ficca and Lloyd holding a TV set with leather jackets and chopped hair this looked like a sure thing. Unfortunately it hardly half delivers. Mitchell has done some decent research, primarily compiled from previously written documents and interviews and Television fan sites. It's awesome to read the early accounts of these dudes, how they came to NYC as itinerant lads at loose ends with reality and their subsequent involvement with the poetry scene as well as the New York Dolls heyday. The author divines some fairly interesting analysis from the early poem texts and tackles some pretty obscure reference and context thus. But it would've been amazing to have retrospective dialogue with the subjects as well as more select photos than what's here. And there's some sorely lacking flashpoints such as any detail on the release of the first Television 7" "Little Johnny Jewel" on Ork: an incredible historical gap. But if Verlaine and Hell had any significance in your life as poet/musicians then you kinda gotta get this.

Mad Monk is the new label **Wooden Wand** has started after discontinuing the long running Polyamory enterprise. Polyamory was a united effort betwixt Wooden Wand and the Vanish Voice's James Jackson Toth and Tovah O'Rourke. Purportedly since Tovah was whisked off by the jamming guns of Wolf Eyes' John Olson and betrothed in an Ypsilanti, Michigan love nest James thought to create a new phase label and Mad Monk is off and slamming. First up is a very hip and unctious LP by the legendarily obscurant New England kosmiche syrup improv trio **Astral Blessing**. Anyone lucky enough to have ever caught one of AB's gigs will have sweat dripping down their calves knowing that this baby now exists. Paul LeBreque (Sunburned Hand of The Man, Trees Chants & Hollers, Aeth'r Myth'd, The Other Method, Soil Sing Through Me) was truly under the influence of grade A channeling when performing with these cats and it's high time we have the privilege of strapping this lady on any time we need that special rip.

Nordic Visions LP by **Vanishing Voice** (Gypsy Sphinx) is a rattly, diffuse set of folk-based brick-rattle improvs. Even though Pete Nolan is present at the sessions, there is no rapping (or even much in the way of non-rap vocalizing, either). The results might be a little generic in terms of non-focus string-thrust, but hey—it's a *great* genre. Label can be had through Fuestron or Volcanic Tongue. About a thousand miles more trad in its folk stylings is the *Life Without Outlaw* LP (Grotto) by Oklahoma's **Outlaw Con Bandana**. Led by Brendan Hagberg, this quartet combines first gen revo-folk (*ala* the Knitters) with a spiny combination of loner motion and deep rural vibrations. A few parts are so accessible you'll almost want to ignore them, but the overall brunt is excellent, in the style of albums on the old Raccoon label.

The most interesting surprise poetry this time is *Twin Vapor* by **Eric Amling**. His writing is great. Long-lined poems are filled with gorgeous surrealist imagery, bleeding heart galore and plenty of yucks. This would include perhaps the best penis nickname I've yet had the pleasure to encounter—the Episcopal Hammer. Seek it for pleasure. Less of a surprise, but equally excellent is the new batch from Bill Shute. Bill has been writing for a long time and was a huge influence on my generation of fanzine clowns for his breadth of vision and sheer chops. More recently, he has been churning out booklets of great worth. The latest pile of them includes: *Extension, Sonnets for Bill Doggett, So Long*, and three new editions of the Sound Library Series (*Spirit*, *Balance* and *Envy*). Apart from the rather more formal sonnets, Bill's work writhes across the pages, owing certain debts to the Language Poets, but not getting caught in the stink of their dead fish. This stuff is fully alive, fast and beautifully observational. Published by Kendra Steiner Editions.

Most excellent new noise label of the month goes to **Trash Ritual** out of Maryland. Kinda came outta nowhere with six cassette releases early in the year by a litany of completely confusing yet astoundingly deadly harsh hitters such as Blood ov thee Christ, Slow Burning and the extreme waste stasis sonics of The Rita who we gabbed about last column. A recent

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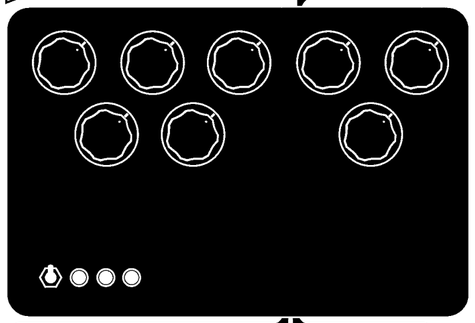
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slew of seven tapes has us nailed to the floor with sicko nerve damage and narco psychosis. Some real heavy bladder piercing via the entrail fucking efforts of infamous Japanese earbleeder **Government Alpha** as well as the intriguing **Genius Females** and contemporary favorite **Circuit Wound**. A robust menagerie of mung-noise scum.

Emily Maguire from Sydney, Australia has been writing commentary for the Sydney *Morning Herald* with sharp and personal observances on race, religion, abortion, teenage life and all things worth opining on for a few years now. She's a young voice coming out of seemingly nowhere with significant ideas and a completely arresting linguistic savvy. She recently blew minds with her first novel *Taming the Beast* (Brandl & Schlesinger, Australia) which involves itself with the brutal seduction of a 14-year-old schoolgirl by her English Lit teacher. The sex scenes in this book are graphic and constant yet never gratuitious or purposefully titillating. But they are shocking and the trajectory of the girl's life, particularly after being abandoned by the teacher, who we find out is a repressed sadist, constitutes an intense page-turner. The book rips like a contempo crime noir thriller. It's underlying vibe is one concerned with psycho obsession brought on by animal physics as exacted by intellectuals who you'd think could save themselves by their own wisdom. But, alas, fuck that, these people are doooooomed. A crazy read that has been zonking OZ and translated into German, Italian, Polish and Russian and ready to be published Stateside right about now by Harper Perennial. A wicked ride.


Impractical Cockpit

To Be Treated (Load) by New Orleans' **Impractical Cockpit** is their first post-disaster LP, but it is no more filled with dread than prior efforts. This always-mutational combo has a way of adding a certain dab of power-raunch to their free-form freak rock, which gives it an edge over its more pointy-headed peers. Without veering into sheer noise, they manage to totter pretty damn close and pretty damn well. Load has also blessed us with an LP by Massachusetts' **Fat Worm of Error**. *Pregnant Babies Pregnant with Pregnant Babies* is a lot like the good parts of Chris Cooper's old band, Caroliner. There's a combination of chittering insect nonsense and a centerless, gravity-defying surge of rock-based music that flows over everything the way butter flows across waffles. It's a delicious sproing of anarcho-gush mechanics.

In person, I always find **Ian Svenonius** to be something of a (small p) pixie. That said, his new book, *The Psychic Soviet* (Drag City) is pixie-ish only in its size. The font is goddamn hard for an old guy to see all the time, but when the words swim into focus they're hep. Basically a collection of essays pondering stupid connections in quasi-


Ian Svenonius

rigorous academic doublespeak, *The Psychic Soviet* is one of those books that is most satisfying when opened randomly (perhaps whilst on the commode) and nibbled in small bits. Also of note is the latest book by **Chris Kraus** called *Torpor* (semiotext(e), USA). The writing exhibits, in full force, the talent first perceived in her scandalous 1997 debut "I Love Dick" (about the author's brief period of investigative obsession of renowned media theorist Dick Hebdige). For incisive, and intimate, observations of the social miasma of the art world and, indeed, the sexual politics inherent in this world, Chris is caustic, romantic, self-involved and seductive. *Torpor* concerns itself with a feminist filmmaker consumed and confounded by the intellect and desire of a rapacious philosopher lover. The writing is personalized and smart and by its very nature of open thought and independent energy succeeds in being the great work you hope the book's character to exact. A very cool surprise.

It's been a while since we got a package from Sympathy for the Record Industry, but one's here and it's a goodie. Two new sets from protean NYC bands, originally active in the dead days of pre-punk blandocracy. **Suicide**'s *Attempted* 2LP set was recorded at Max's Kansas City in January '80. It's a great recording and captures the duo at a particularly sophisticated juncture, floating free from their ultra-aggressive roots, actively creating a kinda viral machine psychobilly. Brilliant shit. Then there's the **New York Dolls**' *From Paris with Love (L.U.V.)*, another 2LP set. It doesn't necssarily add a whole lot to the band's discography (it's been out in a couple of different versions before), but it sounds boss, and demonstrates these guys were on their game right up 'til the end (which this show was). Ah well.

Nice crude little art magalet arrived from Mark Nichols. **Patter #1** collects a


Fat Worm of Error



Suicide

bunch of crude single page illustrations, many of which remind me of the work of Napoleon Dynamite. Which is a kinda good memory. Whitewalls produces books at the opposite end of the production spectrum: high quality paper, design and content. They've had a bunch of good stuff lately, and the two that are in front of me right now are no exception. *Peter's ABC Book* by **Robert Amft** is a 60th anniversary reprint of a strange kids alphabet book by a Chicago-based illustrator. Both straightly sentimental and possessed by an untaggably odd aesthetic, it's quite pleasing. As is *Red Empty (Chicago 2003)* by Swedish artist **C.M. von Hasswolff**. This book is a collection of red monochrome prints of empty buildings, transformed by their color bath into structures more hypnotic and mysterious than their reality would ever dare hint. Nice.

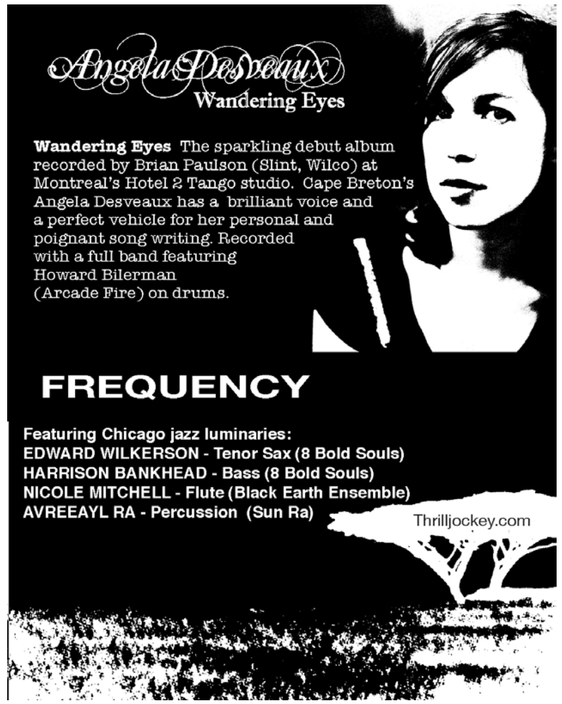
Some records yield their mysteries immediately. Play them once and you know them. Other take a certain mood or a certain time and place to connect. One of the latter is the LP by **Aritoma Nishihara**, which we've been trying to decode for several months. Overdubbed layers of vocals, acoustic guitars, bamboo flute and other things make the music here seem so ephemeral at first that it's almost hard to ineract with. But the more you play it, the deeper it digs under your skin. There's a wide-eyed intensity to the explorations here that eventually allows you to go past the simplicty and brightness of the surface and make you realize that the inner workings of the music are dark, confused and very strange. The vocals are in Japanese, but they still carry a mood of confusion and yearning that is palpable beyond the barriers of mere language. It's a beautiful, deeply personal effort, with touches of Takoma, early Mazzacane, and comteporary loners. It's also very worth your time.

Alright, we finished up with a couple solid days of DVD viewing. Yow, there's a lot of stuff to see. The **Galaxie 500** *Don't Let Our Youth Go to Waste* 2DVD set (Plexifilm) is a straight up collection of what must be just about all the live footage they could unearth, from an afternoon at the Middle East through UK television stuff. And these guys were not always the most exciting band to watch, but it sure sounds good to us. The booklet interview by James McNew is funny, too. Related to this is **Damon & Naomi**'s *Shibuya Nest Tokyo Japan June 24, 2005* DVD (Damon & Naomi), which is a simple document of an amazing live show. The pair is abetted by Michio Kurihara and Masaki Batoh from Ghost, as well as Bhob Rainey (of nperigm). Legendary Japanese free-folk guy, Kan Mikami, even comes out for a guest spot, and the results are very hep. Trash viewing highlights were two from Mondo Macabro. We'd known Terry Riley's great, writhing soundtrack to **Lifespan** for years, but had never had a chance to see the movie. Now it's available and it's a strange '74 European thriller about weird science with Klaus Kinski. Hard to follow at times, but still slippery fun, and the Riley stuff works great. Also splendid is **The Devil's Sword**—a berserk Indonesian movie about cyclops and umbrellas and people with bad skin. Excellent. A new company, Other Cinema, also sent three cool ones. Russ Forster and Dan Sutherland's **So Wrong They're Right**, which is kinda the grandaddy of all the underground documentaries that've been done of late. It follows the arc of the 8-track fan world and has funny interviews with such heavies as Phil Milstein, Michael Hurley, David Greenberger and lots more. Craig Baldwin's **Sonic Outlaws** is about musical appropriation and copyright shit. Largely grounded in Negativland's troubles with U2 and SST, it also features stuff on the Tape Beatles, John Oswald and even a bit of historical context. Some of the collages are choppy to watch, but it's interesting as hell to actually see Negativland at work and play. Animal Charm's **Golden Digest** is a collection of videos made from "found" footage, ranging from the hideous to the sublime. Some of the pieces are totally great and very strange, others are not so compelling. But hey—we sat through them all, *so could you*. Finally, there's an insane thing called **Trash Talking** by Paper Rad. It is like watching some sorta psychedelic Atari 64 game while you're zipping around the house on too many 'shrooms. Yikes. Check it out.

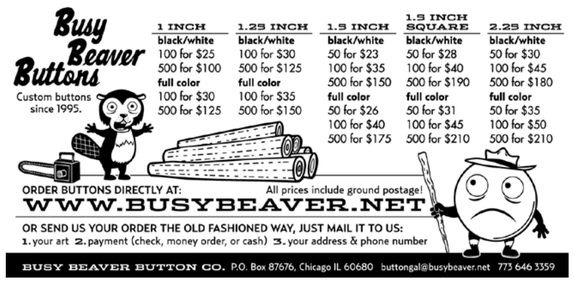
Okay. We're outta breath, space and time. Bye.

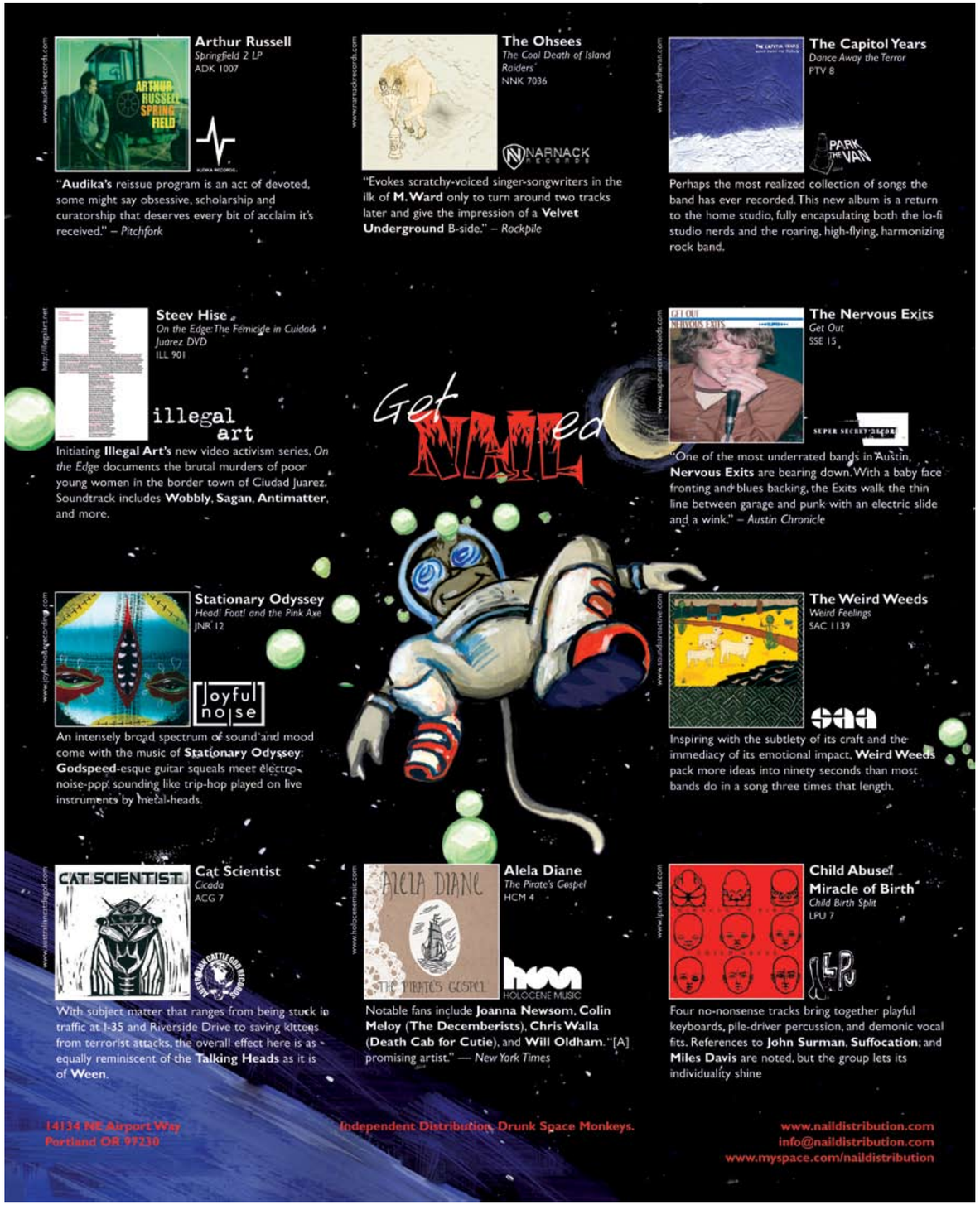
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C&D

Two guys reason together about some new records

Note: C&D is a dialogue presented as a series of record reviews, and intended to be read straight through...



Akron/Family

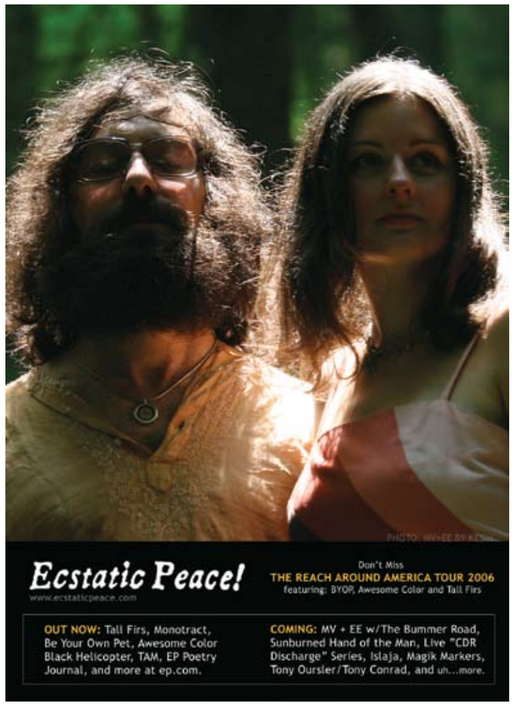
AKRON/FAMILY
Meek Warrior
(Young God)

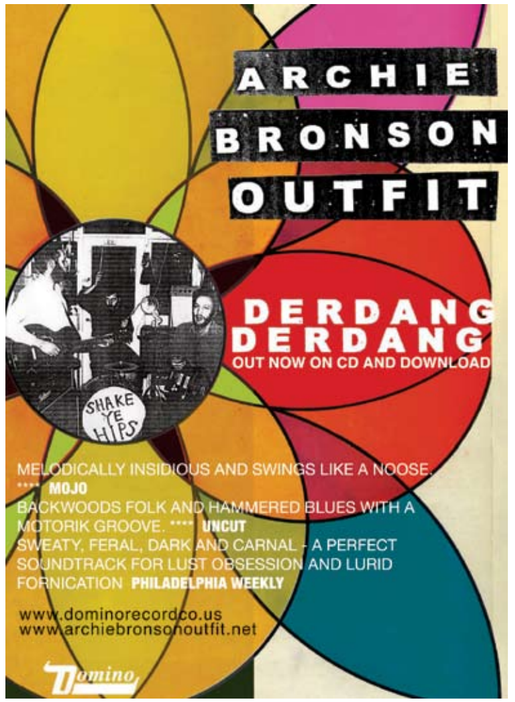
C: [*Looking at publicity photo of band*] I'm surprised these guys haven't featured in *Arthur* magazine yet. They ap!pear to meet many if not all of this magazine's apparent requirements for coverage.
D: What, they have beards?
C: Yes. I think the magazine is pretty clearly a beards-only policy. It's pretty clearly where the underground beard was re-born. Or should I say, re-grown. Remember Alan Moore on the cover of *Arthur* No. 4?
D: That was a beard to be reckoned with. No razors and shaving cream in the Moore household!
C: Total 'Lord of the Beards.' On the other hand, Alan's finger armor stylings haven't caught on yet.
D: I will keep an eye out for the beard as we check out these records today. I assume there will be ladies, too?
C: Yes, of course.
D: Who presumably are not of the bearded variety.
C: One never knows, does one? [*arches eyebrow meaningfully*] Anyways, Akron/Family not only have some beardage, they have four-part harmonies, great cascading drumflows, sprawling late Trane skronk, and that's all on the first track! I saw these guys once! in L.A., they were like a devotional Animal Collective...
D: [*smiling upon hearing the refrain "Gone, gone, gone/gone completely beyond."*] Ah yes. Beyond. One of my favorite places.
C: [*ignoring, continuing*] ... in Oshkosh overalls, without the echo delays. Like Lubavitchers gone Sun Ra or Ya Ho Wha—
D: Say wha?
C: [*snobbishly*] Those who know, know. [*continuing*] They were awesome, in complete uni-mind synch. The audience made backward-and-forward ocean ripples and sounds at their command: 'Shhh, shhh.' It was beautiful.

BEACH HOUSE
Beach House
(Carpark)

C: Lovely—possibly perfect?—debut album from this girl-and-boy lovebird combo who sound like they're living down by the sea on some magic moonlit beach that stretches from France to Baja to Bali.
D: [*looks at biographical notes and photo*] Actually they live in Baltimore. And there is no beard.
C: Waiter, get this man a beard, *s'il vous plait*.
D: [*ignoring*] But Victoria Legrand—
C: Is that a real name???
D: —is definitely a lady. A lady who knows how to wear an aqua dress.
C: [*looking at the photo*] And a big gold amulet as well.
D: I would say this is late summer music, recorded at the beach house after everybody else has gone back to the city.
C: It's kind of minimal naturalismo—organ, drum machine, gorgeous female voice: Stereolab, minus le krautrock propulsion. Midway between Brightblack slow-to-stillness, Beach Boys "Pet Sounds" melancholism and Air and another Carpark artist, Casino vs. Japan. Also, what the heck, I'll throw in that first Bjorn Olson record on Omplatten [*Instrumentalmusik: Instrumental Music...to Submerge in...and Disappear Through*, 1999]. Nordic beaches. As you can see, D, it's a very particular, yet universal, mood. I see soundtracks in their near-future. [*picks up phone*] "Hello, Beach House? This is Sofia..."
D: Her voice reminds me a bit of Sigur Ros. Hey, whatever happened to those guys? It's like they evaporated.
C: She can really SING, when it's called for, which is in creamy middle of the album on the song "Auburn and Ivory."
D: Is Auburn the new Ebony?
C: All the songs have some sophisto pop songwriting going on: bridges, key changes, et cetera. And the sounds... when the organ comes in on "House on the Hill," it's like Captain Nemo down in the Nautilus playing pipe organ for the octopi. Whew! Can you imagine these guys with a big budget...?
D: Ahoy! Captain Nemo: ANOTHER famous bearded musician.









Mick Barr and Zach Hill

MICK BARR & ZACH HILL
Earthship
(5RC)

C: New summit album by underground instrumental speed kings: guitarist Mick Barr of Ocrilim, and drummer Zach Hill of Hella. It'll tighten yer wig!
D: Well, I won't need coffee for the next five months.
C: They're going in for the kill like two old ladies speed-crocheting. Mind the! wheedlework.
D: They are the speed criminals who no doubt are under surveillance by the authorities of rock. There's a NEW MOTHER IN THE TEMPLE if you know what I mean!
C: It does have that High Rise/Mainliner/Musica Transonic thing going a bit. Ah, Japan. Some people may also be put in mind of the Peter Brotzman Octet classic assault album, *Machine Gun*.
D: That's a ripping title, "Earthship." [*considers*] If you lived there, you'd be home by now.
C: Sometimes they're against each other, sometimes they unify.
D: I must ask: is there a beard?
C: [*looks at publicity photo*] Have beard, will rock.These guys are the opposite of Sunn o))): they do as many notes and beats as possible per hour. It's anti-void music, filling everything with sound.
D: Without the benefit of riffage.
C: There ARE riffs—you just need to adjust your attention to catch them. It's condensed free rock. Like the instruments are too hot to handle. Except flor this one song I keep coming back to... [*plays* "Closed Coffins and Curtains."]
D: Whoa! What...is...THAT???
C: It's like some super-processed symphonic tri-guitar. Like what that weird Godley & Creme instrument was supposed to sound like, remember that? The Gizmo. They made a whole triple-album with it, and Peter Cook too. Bonkers stuff.
D: [*playing the 30-second track again*] I am totally spooked. [*musing*] Perhaps if Mr. Ocrilim slowed down and contemplated like this occasionally, he'd get to somewhere really rewarding.
C: Rewarding to you.
D: [*laughs*] Of course, me! Who else matters?

THE HORRORS
The Horrors ep
(Stolen Transmission)

D: [*Reading song titles*] They have a song called "Sheena Was a Parasite"? I worship them already.
C: Frantic organ and guitar-driven psychobilly freakbeat rock'n'roll by five sharply dressed'n'coiffed Dickensian Brits from the belfry.
D: They look likle they live in chimneys and spend all day drinking red wine and listening to The Cramps, Tav Falco & Panther Burns...probably the Hives too, and the Birthday Party and Screaming Jay Hawkins (who they cover here) and Screaming Lord Sutch and of course the right honorable Arthur Brown. I think they like bourbon and some pretty nasty stuff.
C: [*listening to* "Excellent Choice"] They've got a good look and a good sound and they seem up for a good party. They'll come to your town and help you burn it down. And then dance in the ashes.



The Horrors

PRIMAL SCREAM
Riot City Blues
(Capitol)

C: They're been around approximately forever. And this is their once-a-decade "rock n roll is dumb fun" concept record, apparently.
[*C & D cringe for 15 minutes*]
C: Talk about the horrors.
D: Where's the pooper scooper?
C: Rock n roll should be fun, it can be stoopid, but it should n!ever, ever be tedious. One hates to witness someone failing at slumming. It's embarassing to all involved. Does [Primal Scream singer] Bobby Gillespie seriously think this band can boogie? Ha ha ha. Poor Mani...
D: [*thoughtful*] Every once in a while an object is mysteriously withdrawn from stores by its manufacturer shortly after its introduction. That kind of decisive action may be appropriate here.

THE USA IS A MONSTER
Sunset at the End of the Industrial Age
(Load)

C: You will recall that both members of THE USA IS A MONSTER are members of Black Elf Speaks, which is one of the great band names ever.
D: What did Black Elf have to say?
C: I don't know, it was this kind of gibberish? But it seemed important. [*sadly, as if narration*] 'And Black Elf spoke, but no one could understand what he said.'
D: [*helpfully*] Maybe he had something in his mouth.
C:
D: Or, he might h!ave a speech impediment.
C: ...
D: [*looking at album cover*] Naturally I am wondering, what kind of monster?
C: Probably some kind of troll. On PCP.
D: That's pretty negative. ... Um.... Idiocracy got you down again?
C: Yeah... Between seeing that and re-reading Chris Hedges's *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* last week, I guess I'm feeling more bleh about human life than ever. The idiots don't know when to stop. And there's more and more of them. They want war and fast food and spectacle. They're bad at learning. We're outnumbered, and it's only getting worse because the herd never gets culled, since we lack exterior predators.
D: [*considers*] No more trolls.
C: What are we gonna do? I don't see a way out. Ah, hell. Maybe that's why the industrial age is going to end, as it says here on the album cover.
[*reading from the press sheet*] "Of course The USA Is A Monster wants to turn the tide and prepare us for the time after the lights go dim

on Western Civilization's exhaust pipe party." Sounds good to me! Let's engage. [*starts* "The Greatest Mystery"]
D: YEARGH!!! THUNDERAMA!
C: Whoa. [*45 minutes later*...]Whoa.
D: A shining path indeed! Was that all one song?
C: Unbelievable, just ridiculous. The Who, Bruford-era Kid Crimson, Oneida, minute-men, Lightning Bolt, Liars, Rush. Homeopathic progrock with a lot of heavy spiritual-political truths and theories ("We are only holograms") and jokes and accusations ("You're a liar! And a CROOK!") and digs ("My favorite subject is...me!"). That last song, the three-section "The Spirit of Revenge"...
D: What a giant marching groover that one is! These guys must be super-fit. I'm guessing it's a lentil and walnut-heavy diet.

WOLF EYES
Human Animal
(Sub Pop)
D: [*listening to* "A Million Years"] This makes me insanely happy but I can't put my finger on why exactly.
C: I feel like it's 4am at the docks and we're hearing the soundtrack to some new-mil-lenium industrial-environmental horror show. To update Funkadelic: Mother Earth is REALLY screaming now. [*listening to* "Lake of Roaches"] Especially now that these noise dudes have a horn. Yikes.
D: I see scrapheap monsters vomiting spare parts and microchips.
C: Urgh, this is uncomfortable in a really good way, like a good ol' Khanate death-slog through the bog. It's the feel-nothing hit of the fading summer.
D: "Rusted Mange" sounds like somebody get-ting run over.
C: "Leper War" is more queasy listening. I'm thinking of torture gardens and animal abuse science labs. All the atrocities going on behind the curtain. Machines playing with their prey. Angry dogs chomping on kids' talking playtoys. Trains full of prisoners.
D: [*thoughtfully*] This is music to blow up Monsanto to.
C: Wolf Eyes: for when you want to detonate your day.


The Thermals

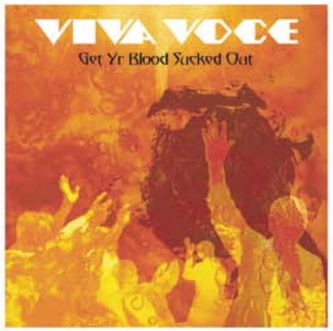
THE THERMALS
The Body, The Blood, The Machine
(Sub Pop)
C: Melodic meat-and-potatoes punk rock trio from the Pacific Northwest. Two women and a beardless man. This is a concept album about being on the run from a Christian authoritarian USA of the future.
D: [*in Chuck D. voice*] Fear of a Christian Planet. Fear, baby.
C: In other words, it serves as science fiction adventure, prophecy and soundtrack for real life in half of this country! It's okay—I like the sentiment and the ambition—but I'm bored.
D: None of the hooks go in deep enough. It's probably good to drive to, though.
C: The guy's voice reminds me of Lee Ranaldo's, which makes me think I'd rather be listening to *Daydream Nation*. Ha!
D: That should be the new *Arthur* bumper sticker: "I'd rather be listening to Daydream Nation."



Good God!

Good God!: A Gospel Funk Hymnal
(Numero Group)
C: Here's another shining path: Christian funk-soul music from the late '60s, early '70s, which, let's face it, that period was insane in every genre, every medium.
D: The first two minutes of this album provide everything I need from music.
C: This makes me love Jesus a lot more than when they come to my door and yell at me. Another Grade AAAA reclamation project from Numero Group, America's most consistently great record label. No one runs a dig like they do.
D: They live in the crates.
C: They were BORN in the crates.
D: [*boogieing*] I'm happy as a Christian on the pipe and there's nothing Bobby Gillespie and the Thermals can do about it! [*thinking*] If Christian soul is so good why is Christian rock so bad?
C: Well, you know what they say: the The Lord records in mysterious ways. And nu gospel metal is one of the most mysterious.
D: Christian rock has more preservatives and additives and pesticides and weird chemicals in it, which gives it big hair and a nasty sheen. This, on the other hand, is organic soul. Black granola Jesus.

THE BYRDS
There Is A Season boxset
(Sony Legacy)
C: Four CDs and a DVD for you, the gracious few. Their sound really sounds good right now. It must be those harmonies! In the book McGuinn talks about how none of the three of them had a distinctive enough voice for pure lead—but together the three made one beautiful voice. Then you've got those great jazz drums, that guy's got interesting stuff going on all the time, and is willing to stop it all when it's called for. And the guitar solos are completely nuts. People always think about the Byrds and the chiming 12-strings, band there is that, but the guitar solos are these wonderful jagged raga/jazz stop-start-scatter runs, if that makes any sense. I guess I just never had ears to hear it before. Music for golden hours in the forest, by the river. Pretty good for cleanly shaven gents. They were always tasteful 'til they got shaggy in the '70s—played folk songs, played contemporary stuff (Dylan covers), some beautiful originals.



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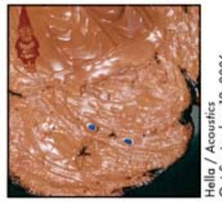


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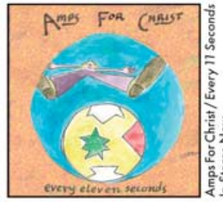
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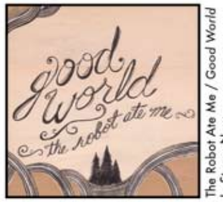

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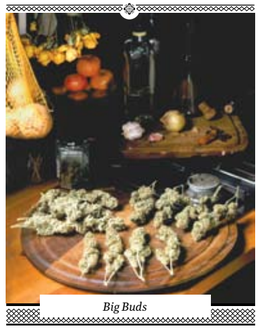
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D: [*sings along to* "5D (Fifth Dimension")] "I opened my whole heart to the !whole universe and I found it was loving/and I saw the great blunder my teachers had made/Scientific delirium madness..." Still one of the best descriptions of the spiritual side of an LSD trip I have ever encountered
C: David Crosby's extremely gentle three-way plea "Why Can't We Be Three" is pretty astonishing in its brazenness. You want to know how it will be/me and you/or her and me?' Etc. And their version of "Wild Mountain Thyme"—"we'll go gathering mountain thyme across the wild purple heather"—with harmonies and orchestra is as goosebumpraising as that Ravi Shankar at the Kremlin album.
D: Live cuts on disk 4? Not so happening.

TRAINWRECK RIDERS
Lonely Road Revival
(Alive)
C: Really good cosmic country-tinged Bonnaroo-ready indie rock from San Francisco by dudes who can write hooks. Shit, I bet they can jam it out too.
D: I don't know why I'm filing it under "guilty pleasure," but I am.
C: No need to feel guilty. But yeah I can already hear the hacky sacks being hacked, or kicked, or whatever it is they do. Still, you can't judge a band by who you think their fans will be...

THE BLACK KEYS
Magic Potion
(Nonesuch)
C: I guess their fan Robert Plant didn't end up joining the band on bass after all. Maybe he forgot to file for his post-beard exemption.
D: Excellent! The Black Keys. They take this stuff so seriously. There's axle grease on their denims at all times.
C: So, after their tremendous levee-busting EP of Junior Kimbrough covers, here's their major label debut. Are !diminishing returns setting in?
D: It's already a cult classic with me! And that's the only one who matters.
C: You know, I hate to say it, but this is really underwhelming material from an incredibly talented band. I'm not hearing a single one of those choogling grooves that they used to mine so effortlessly. Sometimes low fidelity does not equal authenticity, it just means it sounds like crap.
D: Well it's good enough for me to want to fire up the grill and have a cookout.
C: I'm hungry for something more.


Big Buds

ED ROSENTHAL'S BIG BUDS CALENDAR
(Quick American Archives)
D: The best month is the Dutch still life with the other herbs and stuff:
C: It's called "after the harvest" of course. [*laughs*] They totally h!ave this calendar hanging by the desk at all the farms up in Humboldt.
[*Reading*] Ha, "Slacker Thanksgiving" on Nov. 23, that's a funny one. "As the bud ripens." Heh.
D: To paraphrase AC/DC: Ed Rosenthal has the biggest buds of them all.

BUFFALO KILLERS
Buffalo Killers
(Alive)
C: Trio from Cincinnati—stomping ground of Bootsy Collins and Afghan Whigs—with two lumbering looking beard brothers who make a sweet racket that recalls the Black Crowes, Mountain, Hendrix. Definitely some Beatles on the first two songs.
D: From the same label that first signed the Black Keys. They must have scouts all over Ohio.
D: My main concern is why don't they call themselves The Buffalo Lovers. [*suspiciously*] Were any buffalos harmed in the making of this album?
C: I love an album that builds and starts hit-ting its stride by the halfway point. All "River Water" needs, if it needs anything more, is P.P. Arnold singing backup. Then they destroy you with the next tune...
D: [*listening to* "With Love"] Now THAT is a ballad.

BLIND FAITH
London Hyde Park 1969 dvd
(Sanctuary)
C: Well this is pretty cool. They've issued the DVD of this great film of this short-lived supergroup playing for free to 100,000 at London's Hyde Park back in 1969.
D: It was so weird living through the decade called the '80s and witnessing Steve Winwood wearing a leather trenchcoat and making sterile radio pop. And now to see Winwood here, looking so young. [*The band kicks into* "Sea of Joy"] He really was a great soul singer. Whoa check it out, they pan the crowd and there's is Kenneth Anger! himself in epaulets and sideburns and black lips wav-ing his wand of joy.
C: Did you ever notice that every object or action is suddenly improved if you add "of joy" to the end of it?
D: Let's see...I think I'll grow a beard of joy. Shitbonger, you're right!
C: Nice to see that bearded Ginger Baker brought along his handpainted drums on this occasion. Ginger in the '60s was the equivalent of Gary Young from Pavement in the '90s: a wild older dude who's really good, but may not mix well with the others.

GRAHAM COXON
Love Travels At Illegal Speeds
(Parlophone/EMI)
C: Here comes the resolute ex-guitarist from Blur with just a corking great solo album, his best one so far.
D: Blur? I did not appreciate that bloodless dress-up party called Britpop.
C: Well between this and that Dirty Pretty Things single I'm ready to get out my Fred Perry shirts again.
D: Yet if you hadn't told me about the Blur connection, I would simply be feasting on this short spiky guitar nugs. He sounds like a long lost friend of Wreckless Eric, which makes him a friend of mine.
C: Listen, Graham's even written the essential tune addressing the new beard co-nundrum. Dig this song, where he's watching a guy and girl get off together, it's kind of an thematic update of Joe Jackson's "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" [*puts on* "What's He Got?" *and turns up the lyric* "He's got a lot of hair on his face and on his head/ So why I get my hair cut so short instead?"]
D: Apparently in cleancut Graham Coxon's world, the beard gets the girl.



Do the Math
by Dave Reeves



Illustration by Cassandra Chae

Mission Creeps

One of Us Is Not as Dumb as All of Us

For the first time in history, the average American is as informed as the president, whose grasp of world affairs is Power Point deep. What Americans can tell by looking at the current clusterfuck on television is that Palestinians are like Mexicans: fierce sons of bitches with the same preference for moustaches and shitbox stucco. The type of people that civilization has to build fences out in the middle of a desert to swarm over for. These people need to get out of the street, stop their kids from throwing rocks, go home and take a bath. I mean really, were these people raised in a hovel?

The British gave Isreal to the Jews fair and square. If that isn't enough to get these so-called Palestinians high on Zion then maybe they need to check out a little real estate document called the Bible which makes it clear who belongs "down among the Philistines," wherever that is.

Israel has been a gracious host. If I was Isreal I would force these wandering Arabs into a voluntary "Back to Palestine" movement modeled on the deal we had with Marcus Gravy and the coloreds. Nothing is too good for these guys, and that's exactly what they get.

The mandate of America, cobbled together from innate prejudice, propaganda from football coaches masquerading as high school history teachers and television news, demands that we bomb any building that hates super double freedom and the fries that come with it. Then strafe whoever runs from the wreckage.

Our leaders won't let these bleeding head liberal house Arabs doubletalk us into getting specific about which Arabs did what. The known knowns of what we now know we did know then doesn't matter anymore. It's racialistic to discriminate.

America is actually raising the quantifiable dollar amount an Arab life is worth as the cost of guided munitions fuel goes through the roof with every salvo. It's what Yahweh would do if he had the money. Freedom isn't free.

It's better if a thousand men die, or fuck it—I'll raise you to three thousand dead—than letting even one flea on a terrorist get away. Besides, Americans are learning geography. Who knew that Lesbanon was next to Syria? Then Iran, which is next to Iraq, Pipelineistan and then Pakistan. Lined up, just like dominoes. They should use this imagery to package the current police action as nothing but a nice long game of bones.

War is hell to Shabazz Sixpack, but to "the Great Satan," hell ain't no thing. Getting into it with Iran will be twice as fun as the party in Iraq. Just ask the British. So after we kick Iran's ass we'll go on to Pakistan, who have a nuclear bomb.

You hear so many pernicious lies about radiation. If you pull the camera way way back you'll see that nuclear warfare is an evolutionary step from the intelligent designer. God made thee and god made dirt so dirt can't hurt. Look at Japan: a couple flashes is all it took to get those murderous buggers to make cars that don't break down. Those assholes at Ford could use a little of that. Of course having gills and extra eyes looks crazy at first, but the future always looks alien to the past.

Nuclear threats are important to worry about because we can't do a damn thing about them, except be sure that we don't vote some idiot into office. If we did that we might have to get him out before he gets us into some trouble we can't get out of.

Either way, war is fun. I was in Brooklyn when the second building fell down on 911 (not the movie) adn let me tell you, mass carnage gets people laid faster than MySpace. The dead heroes, and the wounded get all the Percosets they can eat.

As patriots, it is our duty to inflict super violence to rid the world of shitty dictators and their Republican guards, be they in Iraq or Washington, DC. So come on you damn hipsters, for the sake of your providentially unborn children, get on your cell phones and flashmob the White House and with vigorous patriotism, grab Bush by his turkey neck and make this Cluster's Last Fuck.

M. WARD
POST-WAR

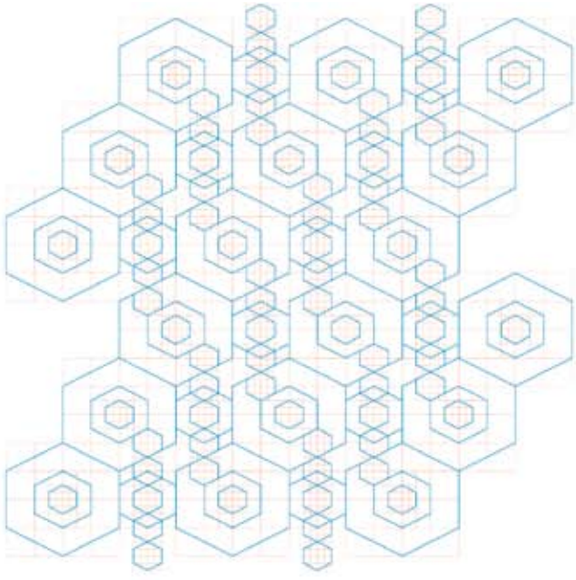


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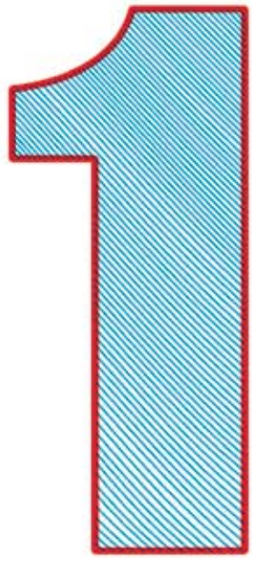
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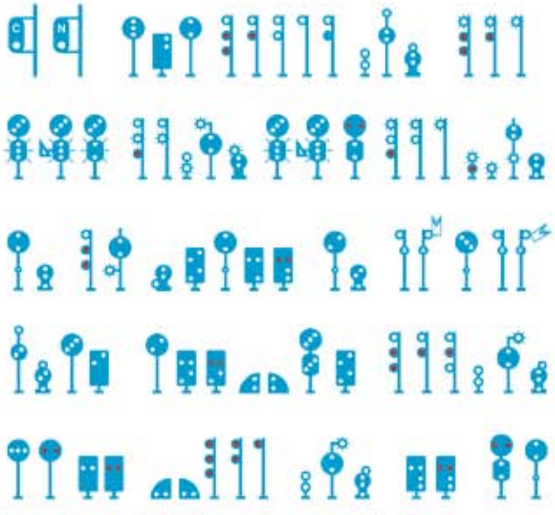
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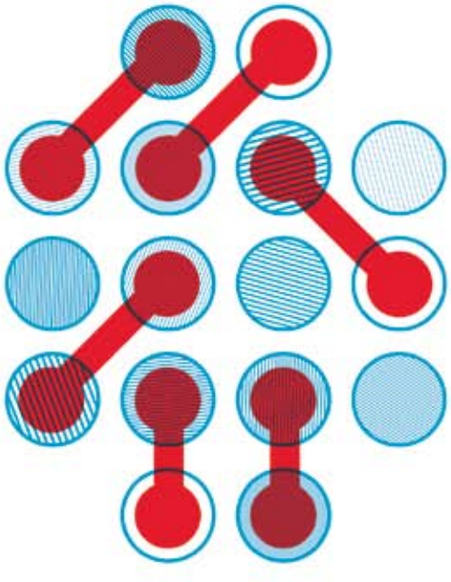
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